

The Hospital World.

AN UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIAL.

I had stepped into a third-class carriage, and settled myself into the newspaper almost without noticing my fellow-travellers, when I was disturbed by a voice near me:

"Seems as though one could smell summer almost, don't it?"

I looked up, thinking I was addressed, and vaguely wondering who could have faith enough to believe in a summer this fickle wintry day, when the sun at intervals gleamed out, to be immediately overcome by the clouds that rushed across the sky in continual succession.

"Yes, 'tis nice to get away from the fogs and dirt. One might believe almost anythink in the country."

I glanced at the speaker, a good-looking dark-eyed young woman of some thirty years. In the opposite corner sat she who had first spoken, a woman perhaps a year or two older. The bandaged foot, nursed tenderly on the knee of her dark friend, and the crutches in the hat-rack above, bore witness to the suffering still apparent in the sweet pale face.

A young girl, surely not yet twenty, but with the weird, old face that belongs to the London-born, slum-bred child, sat beside the pale-faced woman. That she belonged to the party was, alas! but too evident, for in the jacket sleeve the left hand was missing.

The pale-faced woman moved uneasily.

"Ain't you comfortable? Does it hurt?" asked her *vis-à-vis*, anxiously.

"I'm feared my foot bothers you. You've kep' it up such a time for me."

"No, no! Don't you think nothink about that. I'm as comfortable as can be."

The pale-faced woman smiled gratefully, and looked out upon the desolate landscape.

"It's beautiful, the country," she murmured, with a sigh; "but I'm recknin' of gettin' on the water."

They were going to the Isle of Wight, then—we were in the Portsmouth train.

"It do seem a long journey to get to it," said she of the dark eyes. "I'm not one as is fond of the train."

"Makes me awful giddy." The Girl spoke for the first time.

"Do it? You'll be a deal worse when you gets on the water, then." But the Girl didn't seem to mind, and laughed, almost gleefully, in answer.

The pale-faced woman looked up from the pages of a back number of a magazine.

"How kind it is of them to send us. I've been thinking of it all the way."

"Yes, 'tis kind; yet some gives that horspital a bad name."

"We've no call to do that," smiled the Pale-faced.

"That's a true word I always says, speak as you finds people, and I thinks everyone of 'em kind—nurses, doctors, Sisters and all."

"I says just the same. Not one above the other as you might say."

"What doctor did you have?" The Dark-eyed asked the question with a new interest.

And the Pale-faced replied, with more vigour than she had yet evinced:

"Dr. ——. Ain't he a kind gentleman? I only knew as I was goin' away yesterday afternoon, and he comes in to dress my foot. And first he puts the cotton-wool on one way, and then he tries another, and then he takes it all to pieces again and puts it on different, always askin' me if it's comfortable. And at last I says as it feels best without nothink. And says he, as kind as possible, 'Very well, we'll do without it. I want to please yer,' says he, 'and you please me by walkin' back with yer crutches under yer arm.'"

"That's just like him. I had him, too, to do my operation."

"You've been through an operation then, too?"

"Oh, yes. . . ." the voice sunk to a whisper, with a glance at the Girl opposite.

"Shockin'," said the Pale-faced, and then continued: "I've had two operations on my foot. Chloroform each time. Last time, Dr. —, the one as always give it, says to me so pleasant when I come to, 'You took it like a man,' says he."

"Yes, I knows him, as pleasant a spoken gentleman as you'd want anywhere, always ready with his joke. Was you done in the theatre?"

"No, I had both mine done on my bed."

"Oh, I was done in the theatre. My operation was very big."

"They always has everythink handy, and so clean," was the rather irrelevant reply.

All this while, the Girl had been looking out of the window, apparently taking no note of the conversation. Now she turned.

"I've had two operations, and they were both in the theatre, and they sent me to sleep both times."

"And how old are you?" asked the Dark-eyed.

"Sixteen."

"Sixteen; is that all? I calls it shockin'."

"'Tis shockin' some has to suffer so," said the Pale-faced; "but there, 'tis good to get along of such kind people as is in the horspital."

"I did dread goin' in at first, too," replied the Dark-eyed.

"So did I, somethin' dreadful," the Pale-faced smiled sadly; "but my husband says, says he, 'You won't never get that foot well here at home. I must do the best I can for yer, and take yer to the horspital,' says he. And he wouldn't have 'No,' and takes me right off. And now I'd be glad to go again."

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