

Reminiscences.

FRANK.

It was a Sunday and dinner time, and I was bitterly hungry, as a nurse in hard-working training should be, and I was wondering, too, what the Matron of my lying-in hospital would say to me for staying so long at a case to no purpose, when suddenly without warning the waters burst and swept into view—a breech presentation. It was my first breech case. I held up a warning finger to my two kind, but entirely inexperienced, helpers, and spoke cheerily to the mother. “You’ll soon be all right now; baby coming.”

“As soon as is possible feel the cord, and if it has ceased pulsating, remember you have at most two minutes in which to save the life of the child. You must deliver immediately.” The words of our chief doctor rang in my ears, and I knew that there was not the faintest pulsation. God help me; with a life in my hands, despair in my heart, and just two minutes in which to bring down arms extended above the head and deliver the shoulders, which obstinately stuck.

“Sweep the arm over the face.” I could see the gesture accompanying his words, and somehow as I thought I acted, and the little one was born and separated, and I had directed the getting of hot and cold baths for resuscitation and Schultz respiration; and—was it possible?—all was well; and I, even I, had done it. To me, unworthy and faint hearted, had victory been given.

He was a lovely little child, very fair and perfect, and when I saw him again that evening, lying cuddled on the arm of his sweet little Irish mother, he looked angelic. But on the following day when I found that the bowels obstinately refused to act, I knew that my wee boy was not at the end of his troubles. I referred to my immediate superior and by his instructions brought the child in for treatment, with full consent from both parents for any operation which might save his life. The child was unbaptised and the operation might become immediately necessary. Might I, honourably and rightly, as a Protestant, baptise this babe, born of Roman Catholic parents? I consulted a silver-haired priest in the tramcar on my way back. “You will be doing a good work, my daughter,” was the gentle answer.

But there was time to call in a priest and it was not until the next morning that the operation took place.

My little Frank looked so tiny on the operating table. Anxious as I was, I could not but smile to see how out of proportion it all

seemed. The tall men, the operator with his assistants, and the chloroformist, grouped round that one little mite. It was a long business and as time went on I realised its hopelessness. A part of the bowel was practically obliterated and human skill could only hope to prolong life for a day or so.

“Tell them that the prognosis is very grave.” With serious face the operator turned away. Another case called for me, and another, and I could not nurse little Frank. When, late the next day, I came to his cot, someone said wonderingly, “Oh, didn’t you know? He died quite early this morning.”

Sick at heart I turned away, to go back to the mother, bereft of her child, with the feeling that my victory was turned to defeat. In the same room with the mother lay the child, already in his tiny coffin, fair and peaceful.

I could hardly speak. And seeing it, the gentle mother, softly caressing my hand, tried to comfort me. “Don’t ye fret, nurse dear. Sure, it’s harder for you than for us. And, ye know, God wanted him.”

A. Lucy.

A Bequest to Newcastle Nurses.

The trustees of the Heath Bequest (under the will of the late George Yeoman Heath) with the approval of the Charity Commissioners have, says the *Lancet*, elaborated a scheme which will materially benefit the nurses of Newcastle. The income from this bequest amounts to almost £200 annually, which the trustees have decided to divide in the following manner. About one-half is to go to the training institutions and the other half to the nurses’ homes. Prizes amounting to £52 10s., together with a silver medal will be awarded annually to the nurses of the Royal Victoria Infirmary. Of this sum £15 in five prizes go to the probationers; £20 in four prizes and a silver medal to the nurses up for their final examination; and £17 10s. in three prizes to the Sisters. The conditions of the Sisters’ examination are that one-fifth of the marks shall be allotted for the general administration and discipline of the wards, one-fifth for the capability and application shown by them in the instruction and training of the probationers under their special charge, and the balance of the total marks will be allotted for a competitive examination in medical and surgical nursing, including invalid cookery. Prizes amounting to £10 will be awarded for a competitive examination among the nurses of each of the following institutions: the Children’s Hospital, the Lying-in Hospital, the Infectious Diseases Hospital, and the Union Hospital.

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