

## The Re-Incarnation of Sairy Gamp.

BY BEATRICE KENT.

(Concluded from page 451.)

Late the following afternoon, when Nurse Dale was drawing the curtains across the window to shut out the night, she saw a cab draw up to the door. Her curiosity was quickened. Conjecture was unnecessary. Someone large and ponderous had just stepped out, and was standing on the pavement surrounded by band-boxes and bundles! Next she heard the slatternly maid greeting her effusively as "Mrs. Little." Now she was heavily ascending the stairs, then the door was thrown open, and a woman of a very large pattern precipitated herself into the room, panting and puffing, and exclaiming that the stairs had "took" her breath away. A disturbing element in the midst of peace! This large person with the ironical name was arrayed in a black stuff gown and black velvet "dolman"—a strange garment in fashion about 30 years ago—a bonnet heavily trimmed with nodding black plumes, and a large red rose. In one of her large coarse hands, the nails of which were in mourning, she carried a pair of black cotton gloves.

The size, personal appearance, and costume of the new arrival were the very antithesis of the neat little figure in spotless cotton uniform who stood beside her, and Nurse Dale saw a smile flit over the face of her patient as her eyes glanced from one to the other. Nurse Dale herself stood as though spellbound; her eyes danced with merriment, she fully appreciated the humour of the situation. Here was the history of nursing epitomised. A tableau vivant of the old style and the new. Evolution and devolution. An excellent example of moral atavism!

"Well, me dear, how are you?" she asked, depositing a gamp-like umbrella and a band-box on a chair.

"I am doing very well, thank you; Nurse Dale is taking good care of me."

The apparition fixed her rival with a suspicious eye.

"Well, now I have come, we need not trouble her any longer."

"But—are you able to leave your patient?"

"Oh, yes; she is doing beautiful."

"When was she confined?"

"Yesterday, at about this time."

"But—who have you left with her?"

"Nobody; she don't want nobody; she is doing wonderful well."

Mrs. Weakling looked appealingly at Nurse Dale. 'Don't leave me' is what the latter clearly read in her eyes. Aloud she said, "It seems a pity that you should leave her so soon. If you like to return to her, Nurse Dale will stay with me; I am sure your patient will be glad to have you back."

"I've seen you through your trouble with all your other children, and I ain't agoin' to give you up to a stranger with this one, begging your pardon, Miss," turning to Nurse Dale.

Against this there was no appeal, and Mrs. Weakling, with disappointment plainly written on her face, quietly resigned herself to the inevitable. This did not effect the obtuse Mrs. Little, who began to unrobe. She divested herself of the ancient velvet "dolman," and the bonnet with nodding plumes, and so, silently proclaiming her intention of remaining, she took the field.

The baby, who was lying in her cot in the adjoining room, woke up and began to cry.

Nurse Dale took her up and sat down by the fire with her on her knees.

Mrs. Little followed her in, and looking at the tiny creature, she exclaimed, "Pore little thing, she wants a drop o' brandy."

"Brandy! What for? There is nothing wrong with her."

"Ah, but it does 'em good," and she shook her head as though this healthy infant were in extremis!

The humour of the situation had changed to one of seriousness. Nurse Dale knit her brow. Clearly the house could not hold Sairy Gamp and herself at the same time. She must surrender the field to her rival.

A few days later she called to inquire for the mother and babe, a kindly attention, not un-mixed, I fancy, with a little of the alloy of curiosity! She called late in the morning. The baby was unwashed, and smelling of sour milk and brandy!

"How is the baby?" she inquired of Sairy.

"She's better."

"Better! she was quite well when I left her."

"She took a turn for the better," persisted the other, "as soon as I gives 'er a drop o' brandy; I always does it." She looked with complacency upon the damage she had wrought.

There was a change in the baby, certainly, not for the better but for the worse; the little face was white, and she lay curiously still in her cot.

The blood of Nurse Dale boiled in her veins. Here was a clear explanation of the reason why

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