

LITTLE CUCKOO FLOWER.

Next week we shall publish the history, by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, of Little Cuckoo Flower, and how she was gobbled up by a wild beast in Christian England.

REAL INCIDENT COMPETITION.

HAUNTED LIVES.

They are two old ladies who belong to the Early Victorian Age. They might almost be classed as anachronisms. One of them is my "case." She is what I have heard some unsympathetic nurses call an "uninteresting old chronic." But to me she is one of the actors in the last scene of a tragedy that is as full of pathos as many of the so-called great sacrifices which in many cases involved but a momentary struggle and then immediate triumph.

The bare facts, which might be immortalised by a Gaskell or a Mary Wilkins, are as follows:

Born in good circumstances in Early Victorian times these two girls had a most happy home life surrounded by friends. When they reached years of discretion they were told of a heritage of insanity which was potentially theirs. So far it had not shown itself in their or the previous generation. These two young girls then made a solemn compact between themselves never to marry, and so never to risk the carrying on of such a disease into another generation. They had never heard of eugenics. They were not broad-minded or well educated in our modern sense. They had never heard of Mary Woolstonecraft or the emancipation of woman. They quite imagined they were giving up all that life held for a woman and all that woman had to live for—an attitude of mind difficult to appreciate in the days of Margaret Macmillan, Cicely Hamilton, and Christabel Pankhurst. From then their life had nothing of greatness about it, but it was a continual secret struggle. They had many offers of marriage, which, to the mystification of their friends, they refused. Left to themselves, they lost their money through ignorance of business matters, the inevitable result of their training. Then they had spent their time in the struggle to earn a living by "genteel" means, such as fine sewing, teaching French, etc. When I saw them the inevitable had come, and for some years they had been in the workhouse.

But when the younger of the two women told me the story, as she sat by the bedside of her dying sister (who many years ago has

entered into her heritage), the eyes of the former gleamed with a look of triumph as she said, "Thank God we leave no children behind to lead haunted lives, as we have done."

Perhaps you will say their fear was morbid—that it in itself was enough to result in insanity. You might even say their self-abnegation was not necessary. But to me it seems the perfect sacrifice—it was not even for an ideal. It was for little unborn children of a never-to-be-born generation—Lamb's dream children.

Given that it was not necessary, that their fears were groundless, their sacrifice was still wonderful, for as I watched the elder pass through the "White Gate" of Michael Fairless, I thought of Anatole France's words: "Ce qui importe dans le sacrifice c'est le sacrifice même. Si l'objet pour lequel on se dévoue est une illusion le dévouement n'en est pas moins une réalité, et cette réalité est la plus splendide parure dont l'homme puisse décorer sa misère morale."

FLORENCE M. BLOY.

A PATHETIC INCIDENT IN THE EIGHTIES.

The charge nurse had gone off duty, and had left me these instructions: "Look well after poor dad in the corner bed. I fear he won't be alive when I come on duty!"

I had only been in hospital one week, and felt awestruck at these words, knowing all the responsibility would fall on me. I hoped he would live till seven; but in an hour he died.

The nurse on the landing helped me perform the last offices, then had to hurry off to her own wards, leaving me to send for the carriers (to measure for the coffin). When they returned and were placing the old man in it, to my horror I saw it was a shade too small, and the men were *actually* trying to save themselves trouble by forcing in the body. I sternly ordered the men to have the coffin changed for a larger one, but as they insolently refused, I threatened to go straight to the governor of the hospital and report them. These words acted like magic, and the poor lifeless corpse was carried to the mortuary in a coffin that fitted him. I never had any trouble with the carriers again, but I was hardly prepared for the gratitude which came to me from the other old daddies in the ward. What was happening had leaked out behind the screens, and one after another of the old shrivelled hands were held out, and blessings were showered on the new probationer, who was so plucky (they said), and would not let their old comrade be *crushed* into his coffin.

H. COLVIN.

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