

JOHNNIE'S MOTHER.

Someone once said it was the prettiest ward in London. It really was the prettiest in the world, but that is beside the mark. On a particular day in June the sun was shining through the many windows, flowers in abundance adorned the shining tables, cheerful sounds of life and movement came from the thoroughfare without. Within a canary sings, and there is a subdued murmur of conversation from the men.

Subdued, because behind those screens yonder, unconscious of all the sounds of life and joyousness, Johnnie lies a-dying. Johnnie with hair like the ripening corn and eyes blue as the cornflower, with straight and slender limbs, and for all his fourteen years, the face of an angel.

Johnnie's mother sits calm by his bedside, with the terrible resignation of extreme poverty. She makes no sign, save for an occasional tear that she dries furtively on the corner of her poor shawl, save that with her toil-worn hand, a tender mother's hand withal, she smooths from time to time the golden hair, damp with death dew.

She had given the "history." "He was allus a good boy, was my Johnnie. A good boy to 'is mother 'e was. Only left school at Christmas. 'E never went to work afore he lit the fire and got me a cup o' tea. Worked at wood-choppin', 'e did. Yes, sir, I'm coming to it. To-day dinner-time I ses to 'im, 'Johnnie, I ses, 'run and fetch a penn'orth of cheese.' 'All right, mother,' 'e ses. And them was the last words as I 'eard 'im say. They ses as it was one of them big vans as knocked 'im down."

Everything possible had been done for the boy. The surgeon had come down, had shaken his head, said "nothing could save the poor little chap," and had returned West.

How long the afternoon seemed. But with the setting sun came a long sigh, and the blue eyes opened wide. What did they see? Not his mother. They had a distant look.

"Johnnie, 'ere's mother. Kiss mother, Johnnie."

For the first time in his short life he is deaf to the entreaty in his mother's voice.

What are the words that come floating down the ward?

"We commend to Thee the soul."

Ah! Johnnie's mother!

There is complete silence in the ward now. Within the screens Johnnie's mother rises from her knees. With quivering lips she kisses the angelic face, and leaves upon it the tears of her Gethsemane.

"Good-bye, my darlin'," she whispers. "You was allus a good b'y to me, but I reckon as God knows a lump best."

She wipes her eyes once more with her threadbare shawl, and draws it closely round her, as though she were chilly on that warm evening, takes that pathetic parcel of her boy's clothes, and goes out alone.

H. H.

CHILD NURSING AS A CAREER FOR EDUCATED WOMEN.

Scotland can claim to be pioneer in many educational schemes, but not in the particular one about which we write; but Edinburgh has taken the lead on this side of the Border in providing training for nursery nurses—a profession which should appeal to all women, whether they wish to follow it as a means of living, or simply in order to qualify them for the many and responsible duties of home life.

The training as nursery nurse may be commenced when a girl leaves school—a time when many mothers are concerned as to what they shall do with their daughters. Hospital training, which has had a great attraction for our young people in the past, cannot be started for several years after the age of eighteen; so, as a preliminary to hospital training, or as giving facilities for the study of the science of infant life, this training appeals in a very strong measure to educated girls.

The day is now past when unskilled work in any sphere is in demand. Girls very often, unless they are obliged to earn their living or have a strong bent towards some profession, seem to consider that the world holds nothing for them but a possible marriage; and for marriage, the majority of girls, unfortunately, do not realise that training is needed. Thus, there is always a large number of women in the community who enter this most difficult and important of professions without having prepared themselves in the least for it, besides an equally large number who, hoping to marry, have not trained themselves in anything; and if it is a bad thing for a country to be over-stocked with unskilled workers, it is surely infinitely worse for it to be over-stocked with unskilled wives and mothers. The training given in nursery colleges will be invaluable to any girl in after life, and an occupation that gives her the power to earn her own living as well as make a satisfactory wife and mother is worth consideration. Preventive and educative work are the lines on which we must work in these enlightened days and it must be fully recognised that if mothers and nurses had the knowledge required, and which can be obtained by the training in our nurseries, a tremendous amount of illness would be avoided.

The kind of girl to whom this work will appeal most of all is the child-lover, with a vocation for her work, and with it the strong love and patience which go hand in hand; it will also appeal to those who want a quiet home-life without the necessity of a long professional training. Child nursing ought to be as attractive as the now somewhat over-rated hospital life; it demands the best qualities of mind and body in those who undertake it; and the status of the position should be as fully recognised as that of the hospital nurse,

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