

## HARRIET.

### INCIDENTS IN A NURSE'S LIFE.

One hears a great deal from time to time of the humour of the district, and it is well that amid all the pathos and suffering daily encountered one occasionally has a gleam of humour to lighten it. I venture to wonder whether any of my fellow-workers have ever in their experience encountered such an exceedingly unique trio as Harriet and her charges.

I will try to describe them, and to reproduce as far as possible the little comedy daily enacted, and which on Christmas morning seemed to take on additional humour. I have frequently thought that the heart of Dickens would have delighted in it, and his pen doubtless would have immortalised it. I hope my poor efforts to portray it will not be entirely without success.

Imagine first the patient (not much comedy about him, poor fellow), a helpless paralytic of ninety, bereft of intellect, but having freely the power to shriek and yell curses whenever disturbed. Imagine his wife, an enormously fat old woman almost his age, with an ancient mob cap perched on her head, and sitting in a large chair by the fire, seemingly deeply interested in a paper which, by the way, is upside down.

As the nurse enters the paper is laid aside, and Mrs. Y., in a very deep voice enquires: "Seen Harriet, my dear?"

Nurse shakes her head, as the old lady is very deaf. The next moment, with a startling change from her usual deep tones, there is a shrill cry of "Har-ri-et!" the "et" terminating in a high falsetto.

(If the nurse is accustomed to it she stands the shock, but if she happens to be "relieving" she is rather apt to drop something.)

There is a noise of heavy feet up the little passage, and a queer little dumpy figure, with a very round face and big simple blue eyes enters the room. Her hair is taken back severely, and done in a comical little knob at the back, and she wears a large check apron over her marvellously fitting dress. Harriet is the adopted daughter, and truly is a martyr to the wants of the two old people. She stands by pensively, now and then heaving a most tremendous sigh, while nurse begins to wash the patient. As he becomes noisy and abusive, Harriet helps to hold him, whimpering the while. Some cries and curses reaching even the ears of the deaf old woman, she calls out sternly in her shrill falsetto:

"Oh, you naughty boy! Harriet, get the stick! My word, if *mummy* has to come over to you!"

She quivers like a huge jelly, and the cap falling rakishly on one side makes her look like a grenadier.

Nurse manages to hide her amusement, and to prevent the aforesaid stick being used, Harriet not being at all averse to carrying out the old lady's command.

After much struggling and tugging, and many attempts on the part of the patient to bite and scratch, he is at last made comfortable, and he lies peering at nurse with his wicked little eyes, like a mischievous monkey.

Harriet by this time is out of breath, and has one of her headaches. She presents a truly woeful spectacle with one hand pressed against her forehead and the other supporting the back of her head.

"Ain't he just awful!" she ejaculates. "He's worse than he was when he was first took! My word, I wouldn't like to be a nurse—but then, you see, you *never* knows what you may come to!"

As Harriet leaves the room, Mrs. Y. fumbles among the voluminous folds of her dress, and cautiously taking half-a-crown from her purse, tries to slip it into nurse's hand.

"That's for yourself, my dear," she says in a piercing whisper, "for a Christmas box, and don't say nothing to Harriet. No? You won't have it? Then don't you let *her* know as I offered it!" and the reading of the newspaper (still upside down) is resumed so diligently that the old lady's nose quite touches the print.

Harriet re-enters, and looks very suspiciously round, while nurse draws on her gloves.

"Don't you say nothing to 'er," says Harriet in a stage whisper, nodding vigorously at the old woman, "but the father giv' me a Christmas box this morning, he did. He giv' me a *kiss*! But don't you tell 'er. She'd only be jealous!"

This being almost too much even for nurse's gravity, she turns away for a moment, and pretends to refasten her bag. Then she turns round to the troublesome patient.

"Aren't you going to say 'Good morning, Daddy?' she asks, as she reaches the door.

The wicked little eyes twinkle in her direction, he laughs a deep sounding "Ho-ho-ho," and the loose lips twist themselves into shape, as he cries viciously: "Good rid! Ho-ho-ho!"

P. M. BARTON.

## ROYAL COMMISSION ON VENEREAL DISEASES.

Professor Blaschko of the German Society for Combatting Venereal Diseases, told the Commission he was convinced that the Society had thoroughly changed public opinion on venereal diseases. The whole press, as well as the general public, were in sympathy with the movement and supported it.

At the forty-third meeting, evidence was given by Dr. J. J. Pringle, Physician in charge of the skin department of Middlesex Hospital, and President of the Dermatological section of the Royal Society of Medicine.

Dr. Pringle stated that of 36,151 cases of skin diseases dealt with in the out-patients department of the Middlesex Hospital during the last twenty-five years, 1,853, or rather over 5 per cent presented indubitable evidence of syphilis. This

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