

After that there was no more time for musing. The night nurse arrived. Nurse Ruth hurried home to the Institute to send out a few belated Christmas cards. As she paused in the hall to take her letters from the rack the Matron came and spoke to her.

"I want you for a critical case," she said. "A less experienced nurse will do for Sir John Merry. I must send you to Hull to-morrow morning early."

The well-trained and obedient nurse agreed. Doubtless it was all for the best. When she recalled the circumstances of her parting from Alfred Merry it seemed far better that they should not meet again.

Still—for one mad moment—she had hoped—

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Alfred Merry sat by his uncle's bed. The patient was making a gallant attempt to be true to his name on the merriest day of the year.

"This is the last Christmas you'll be plain Alfred Merry, my boy," he said.

"Let's talk about something cheerful," was the reply.

"Most men would think the prospect of a title and a few thousands a year very cheerful," chuckled his uncle.

But Alfred Merry was not that style of fellow, and Sir John knew it.

The conversation was desultory, interrupted by spasmodic coughing.

During one of these attacks, while the nurse was by the bed, Alfred went to the fireside. On the mantel-piece lay a small, quaintly-carved ivory cross. He would have known it among a thousand. Ruth had always worn one such, which had belonged to her mother.

Taking it in his hand, he turned to the nurse, asking softly: "To whom does this belong?"

"Nurse Ruth, who was here yesterday, must have dropped it. She always wears it," she answered, wondering at his odd manner and tone.

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On Boxing Day Nurse Ruth took up her fresh duty. She had travelled to Hull on Christmas Day, had slept indifferently on Christmas night, but, with the fortitude characteristic of her profession, she was quite ready for her work in the morning. The case was, as the Matron had told her, a very critical one, and her thoughts had no time for wandering, either to the past or elsewhere.

Still, when she went out for the daily constitutional, upon which the Institute rules insisted, it must be admitted that she felt flat. For a few moments, while reading the letter to Sir John Merry, the gate of Paradise had opened before her. Now it seemed as fast closed as ever.

She stifled a sigh.

Hull is a dreary town. Boxing Day evening, if you have nowhere to go and nothing to do, is dreary also. There was hardly anybody about. A man's footsteps hurrying behind her and halting suddenly at her side startled Ruth out of her usual self-possession.

"Ruth—have I frightened you? I was so afraid I should lose sight of you—"

With a strong effort she spoke calmly.

"How did you come here, Alfred?"

"By train this afternoon. I found your ivory cross in my uncle's room, and that gave me the clue to your whereabouts that I have been seeking for years."

They paused under an electric lamp while he scanned her face. There was something glistening on her cheeks.

"My darling," he exclaimed, "you are crying."

And so she was for sheer joy.

So it came to pass that Nurse Ruth had a Merry Christmas after all; and though Boxing Day evening was rather late to begin, the happiness was all the deeper for the delay.

LEGAL MATTERS.

"YIELDING TO TEMPTATION."

When Irene Mortimer, of The Grove Hospital, Tooting, was charged at Marlborough Street Police Court on December 12th, with stealing a silk remnant from Messrs. Bourne & Hollingsworth, of Oxford Street, W., value 7s. 11d., it was pleaded on her behalf that she had been in a hospital for two years, was within a week of finishing her probation, and had an excellent character. Commenting on this plea, Mr. Mead, the magistrate, said that every day he found that people of good character were the thieves; only a proportion of convicted thieves did this sort of thing.

It was called "yielding to temptation," and if people thought they were not observed it occurred to them they might reap the benefit, and honest people suffered. He supposed only one in 100 cases discovered was brought there.

The accused was fined £1 and ordered to pay £1 costs.

"WE ALWAYS DO IT."

At an inquest held by Mr. H. R. Oswald, the West London Coroner, at a Paddington inquest, upon an infant, Miss Dorothy Newhall, a Health Visitor, who said she was a certified nurse and midwife, deposed that in accordance with her usual practice she visited Mrs. Taylor, of 20, Chichester Road, Paddington, and her infant son shortly after the birth was notified.

She was aware that a medical man from St. Mary's Hospital was in charge of the case. As the infant was not well she administered a dose of grey powder and gave certain instructions as to feeding and general treatment.

The Coroner: "Then you were assuming the duties of a medical man without having medical qualifications—you had no right to do that."

Witness: "I don't know about that; it has been done by Health Visitors for 12 years."

The Coroner: "Do you mean to say that Health Visitors actually intervene when a medical man is attending a case without consulting him?"

Witness: "Yes; we always do it."

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