

"Advising her to begin the winnowing process," added Harry.

"A profitable subject," said Mr. Fitzroy. "I hope you will go on to teach her how bread is made. Has the post come in? Letters for whom?"

"One for me from Heidelberg. An invitation for Dessie."

"For me! Why, Harry, you never told me!" cried Dessie.

"He was advancing to it, my dear, by gradual stages," said her father. "A little chaff comes first naturally. This is the wheat, I suppose."

Harry held out his letter.

"Would you like to see it, mother? I wrote for advice, as my father wished, and this is the response. Aunt Laura asks Dessie for a six months' visit."

Dessie, for once, found vent for her feelings in a single "Oh!"

"Very kind!" Mrs. Fitzroy said, "only I really do not like to burden them with so troublesome a charge. Sidney is particular."

"The best thing possible for Dessie," Harry answered.

"Mamma, I should not be troublesome," said Decima. "I'll promise anything you like. To go abroad! Oh, delicious!"

"If Dessie were a finished specimen of young ladyhood she would not have had the invitation," said Mr. Fitzroy. "Some people find pleasure in the taming of an orang-outang! I don't see why we should deprive them of it in the present instance."

"And I may go?" exclaimed Dessie.

"It would leave you time to look about, mother, and to make up your mind for the future," said Harry.

"The result being that autumn will find us in precisely the same predicament," said Mr. Fitzroy. "However, that we may leave for the present. Dessie looks ready to explode. Take a run out of doors and tell Ella, my dear. That will evaporate some of your excitement."

Dessie stayed only to ask a few questions as to particulars of time and arrangement; then she rushed upstairs, threw on her walking-things, and set off at railway-speed for her sister-in-law's house.

Ella was working in the front parlour, with little Hugh playing on the ground, under charge of the young nurse—a recent importation. The latter was a willing and good-tempered girl, and, moreover, a particularly pretty one. Ella liked her, but detected symptoms of occasional heedlessness. She scarcely ventured yet to trust the child alone with her, as she had never hesitated to do with her former nurse.

"You have not been to see us for three whole days," Dessie said, on entering. "Oh, Ella, I have something to tell you! But how is the darling to-day?"

"Not quite himself," Ella said. "I am a little tired just now"—and she glanced at the young nurse. "Hughie has a cold, and his teeth make him fretful."

Baby Hubert brightened up at the sight of Dessie, of whom he was very fond. She actually delayed the recital of her news that she might go down on

the floor beside him; while, in his broken language, he expatiated on the excellence of his last new toy—a grey donkey, with panniers and loosely-waving head.

"Yes—beauty—beauty—isn't it, darling?" assented Dessie. "How uncomfortable the poor thing looks, Ella, with it's neck in a state of chronic dislocation. Let me see if I can make Baby's head wag about like hee-haw's."

"Take care, Dessie," said Ella, rather nervously.

"Hee-haw go gallop!" shouted Hubert, enjoying the fun. His stock of words was small, but his enunciation was remarkably clear, and his blue eyes sparkled as he grasped Dessie with his little hands. "Gee-up! Auntie ride!"

"Auntie would smash the hee-haw all to bits if she did," laughed Dessie. "Auntie must ride great big live hee-haws. Ella, why must children always be taught to speak in such a ridiculous way? Why isn't 'donkey' as easy to say as 'hee-haw, and 'horse' as 'gee-gee?'"

"The tyranny of fashion, I suppose, Dessie. It has sway in nursery as well as parlour."

"I wish you would try an experiment with Hughie, and see if he couldn't be made to converse rationally from the first. But he is so unlike other children, I am afraid it would be no test for the generality of them. Little beauty! Isn't he Ella? Just look at him now."

"It is a good thing he is not old enough to understand," said Ella, smiling.

"Ah, you won't let me come near him, by-and-by. I always say so. But I think I could be good for Hughie's sake. I do love him, Ella, more than any of you know."

"I think I know," Ella said, affectionately. "He loves you dearly, Dessie. It I speak of 'Auntie Dessie' he always gives a spring of delight."

"Little sweet! It is just like him," said Dessie, administering a vehement hug to her favourite. "But, Ella, all this time I am never telling you my grand news. What do you think of my going away for half a year? I am afraid it will be rather a relief to you all. Aunt Laura and Uncle Sidney have asked me to Heidelberg for six months. Think how delightful! I do really believe the worst part of the whole is leaving baby. I don't like to lose a single month of him. But it will be lovely to go. I have always longed to see the Continent. And only three weeks to wait, for Aunt Laura knows of a lady going out in just three weeks, and I can travel with her. Oh, Ella, you saw the Heidelberg Fitzroys on your wedding tour. What did you think of Emmie?"

"I thought her particularly pleasing," Ella said.

"Pleasing! Yes, but that is so indefinite. Aunt Dora calls you pleasing, but I should never use the word in describing you. It is too cold. Is Emmeline nothing more than 'pleasing?'"

"Perhaps you would call her charming and delightful, Dessie. You are rather fond of extravagant adjectives, I believe."

"Now, Ella, you are laughing at me.

But I really think—What is that?—somebody to see you? Must you go?"

"For a few minutes, I am afraid. Will you come with me, Dessie?"

"Oh, no; I don't care for strangers. I'll wait here, and help Anne take care of baby."

"You will be steady and careful then, Dessie, dear? I shall not be many minutes gone. Anne, don't let Master Hugh get wild."

"No, ma'am," and "Yes, Ella," came together. Ella left the room, and Dessie seated herself on the floor for a game of play with little Hubert. He was restless and less continuously merry than usual, and presently he crawled away on hands and knees to Anne, who had taken up her work.

"Won't he let me get on with my mending?" asked Anne, leaning over him with a coaxing manner. "Must he be nursed? Very well. Shall I give him a ride on a gee-gee?" and, lifting him upon one arm of the sofa, she began jogging him up and down. Hughie was enchanted. He chuckled and held out his arms to Dessie.

"Auntie Dessie come! Auntie gallop."

"One moment, pet; I'll come," said Dessie, hurrying to the window at the sound of a drum. "Auntie is rather too big, I am afraid, for sofa gee-gees. Oh, Anne, here comes a regiment of soldiers, and an officer on horseback with a plumed hat! Quick, or he will be gone!"

Anne started and turned towards the window, for one moment heedlessly loosening her grasp on the child. In that instant he overbalanced himself, and before she could seize again upon his dress he fell backwards, with a short cry of terror, the little head striking heavily upon the hard floor.

(To be continued.)

A SKETCH OF THE CHILDREN'S INCURABLE HOSPITAL.



FEW weeks ago a simple little poem, entitled "Johnnie," found its way into these pages, and at the same time an appeal was made on behalf of the children of the above Hospital.

To this appeal came an instant response. Voluntary offerings poured in from day to day; generous donors gave largely, others, and some of these mere children, contributed their treasured mite. In a short time a goodly sum was collected, sufficient to guarantee many drives. But, better than the gifts, and sweeter than the richest offering, were the touching words—the heartfelt expressions of sympathy, lavished by these large-hearted strangers on these suffering little ones. Mothers rejoicing in the straight limbs and sturdy strength of their own children, and others who had evidently added to the "store of Paradise," and now wept because "the child is not," invoked tenderest blessings on their heads.

Out of gratitude for this generous response, at once touching and so unexpected, the writer of this sketch—who is herself a weekly visitor at the hospital—feels bound to make some sort of acknowledgment by furnishing a short account of the home and its inmates, that those who have contributed so largely may know more of the objects of their bounty.

The Hospital for Incurable Children in Maida Vale is a hospital in its infancy. It is a small, unpretending house, shut in by other houses of like grade, and only differing from them by the pathetic inscription, set forth in large letters, stating that this is the Hospital for Incurable Children.

Its limited space can only provide for the comforts of twelve children—six boys and six girls; but already a larger hospital is talked about. The site is selected, money is being collected; by-and-by it is hoped that a more extensive building may be erected, capable of sheltering a larger number of these helpless little ones.

Incurable children!—saddest words to be read in the page of humanity!—children whose very name seems synonymous with health, movement, activity of mind and body! What? Must these mere infants experience the dread death-in-life of paralysis, drag the shrunken, diseased limbs of old age, and wear at the same time the innocent faces of childhood; try to articulate with palsied tongue, or move, halt and maimed, through the remainder of their lives? Oh! what sadder decree than this in the loving mysteries of Providence?

And yet many of them are happy little creatures—brave, resigned, and bent on extracting the greatest amount of enjoyment they can out of the passing interests of the day.

There is plenty of kindness in the world, after all; and these children come in largely for their share of it. They cannot go out into the country, poor little things! but in the spring-time baskets full of primroses and cowslips and sweet-smelling violets, fragrant with the breath of woods and bushy dells, decorate the rooms; motherly women, with kind faces, cross the threshold, and talk cheerily to the children. At Christmas time, Santa Claus rains a perfect shower of gifts and sugar-plums, the little fellows play with the presents until the novelty is exhausted, and then they hoard them for the poorer brothers and sisters at home.

Children visit the hospital by shoals. One day, as I was reading to the boys, the door opened, a little creature about four, with a sweet rosy face, walked sedately into the room, followed by her nurse and some older children.

Evidently the little maiden was a favourite visitor. The boys' faces frightened as she walked up gravely to each one, and bestowed her innocent kisses; it was touching to watch the tiny creature in her ministrations of love. Slowly and laboriously, yet with evident pride, she carried round little gifts of fruit and flowers. The kisses were repeated at leave-taking. "Good-bye. I am going away to Devonshire. I will come and see you again," she said, in her clear, childlike treble, reciting her little lesson with the utmost gravity. The boys looked wistful as the rosy face and dark eyes vanished; a child-angel in a white sun-bonnet had visited them, and they were loth to part with her.

During the few months that I have visited at the hospital there have been changes. George, the patriarch of the boys' room, a diminutive cripple, has reached his sixteenth year, the limit to a child's stay in the hospital, and has returned to his ailing father and his poor home.

"Are you not sorry to leave, George?" I asked, feeling as though, in this case, the hospital must have grown into a sort of home.

The little room looked bright as I spoke; a bird sang in his cage; a bright fire burnt on the hearth; gay pictures, texts, illuminated scrolls, decorated the walls over each little cot; the nurse looked gentle and kind; the other boys were gathered round us in a group. "You have been here so many years, George, you must surely be sorry to go?"

He looked at us wistfully, and a little abashed.

"I don't know; I am glad to go home," he said; but there was a sort of reflection of joy on his wan face as he spoke.

Yet his home was poor. His father, who was a bird-fancier, was broken in health—evidently in a consumption; but George had his mother, and he was the eldest. He wanted to go home and help her.

George was sixteen—quite a man now. What though George's body was so dwarfed and puny that he lay like a two-years-old child in his mother's arms; what though those twisted sticks they called limbs inflicted a strange shock on a stranger's mind, the frail body contained a bold spirit. George made mats, which he sold to the visitors, treasuring up the sixpences to give his mother when she came to see him; all his old toys were sent to the brothers and sisters. George would rather be in that poor home, helping his mother with his feeble baby hands, and watching his sick father, than enjoy the comfort of the hospital without them. Brave little heart! God be with thee! for those who know best say that George will never be a man!

A deaf and dumb boy, Frank, the torment and plague of the room, from his love of mischief, has also been discharged. In Frankie's place there sits a dark-eyed boy, Percy.

Percy's case is very sad. He is an only child, and his parents are respectable people. He is a tall, well-formed boy, about ten, but he is fastened into his chair like an infant; his limbs dangle down helplessly; he has no use in his hands, and one of his wrists has been broken and is badly joined. Percy cannot speak, but he utters all sorts of uncouth noises. His intelligence is limited; but he loves music, and applauds after his odd fashion, and laughs with glee at the pranks of the other boys.

There, day after day, he drags on his uncomplaining existence, half-conscious—not imbecile—watching his nurse with large-eyed affection, like some faithful animal, cheering and applauding the efforts of his boy companions to amuse him: a pathetic death in life!

Bertie sits on the floor near him—a bright, intelligent little fellow—the victim of paralysis, which has almost deprived him of utterance, but using bravely his poor little stock of words, which consist mainly of "yes," "no," and "thank you." The last is a grand achievement, and is brought out at all times and seasons. Bertie is the most patient, happy little creature! He will sit for hours trying to build up brick houses with his nerveless hands, or endeavouring to catch the bright-coloured ball with the poor fingers that will not grasp it. One marvels what secret fund of enjoyment convulses his frame with suppressed laughter, for Bertie is a joyous little soul, and has endless jokes with himself and the others, though the fettered tongue refuses to give them utterance.

By his side creeps Johnnie, with his sweet face and bent back. Poor Johnnie is bowed down with infirmity like the woman in the Gospel, who "could in no wise lift up herself"; but his countenance is bright and alive with boyish fun.

He has wonderful games of cricket with James, an older boy, whose only mode of progression is on his knees, but who has a special predilection for active sports; while Freddie, a grave, gentle boy, whose left side is wholly

paralysed, and who also labours under imperfect articulation, sits by and watches them.

A wan little face from the farthest crib watches them too. Alas! there is sad mischief here, for the poor deformed boy, Arthur, the most intelligent of all the children, has knelt through all the bright summer days, propped painfully on his hands and knees, wasting under cruel abscesses, which sharpen and pale the little face more and more. Sweet-natured and silent, Arthur never complains. "He has no pain," he says; "at least, not much." "Is he not weary of that crouching attitude?" we ask. "Yes," he answers, patiently, "but at night he lies on his side." His bent hands work industriously at the little mats whenever he feels better; he watches the other boys in bright-eyed silence as they prepare for some cheerful drive. There are flowers beside him, the sweet air flows through the open windows, but for him there is no pleasant change, until by-and-by the most solemn and the most beautiful of God's messengers—could we but think so—shall carry the weary little sufferer to that still land where "there is no more pain."

Across the passage and up a few more stairs is the girls' room, where Jenny in her red jacket sits smiling in her little crib, with patient, gentle Louie beside her, while Kitty, with her blind eyes, and sensitive fingers, is ready to feel the visitor's dress and hold conversation with her busy little tongue.

Upstairs is the saddest sight of all. Three dumb little paralytic imbeciles, or with imperfectly developed intellects, and in two cases with other diseases added to the long list of infirmities. Fanny and Alice are, indeed, happy in a limited way; but in poor Janie's case death would come as a blessed release—as the only relief to the diseased body and mind.

Limited space prevents the writer of this sketch from giving a fuller description of this part of the hospital, though she may probably do so at another time; but enough has been said, we trust, to excite still more the warm sympathies of those kind hearts that have already been so generously touched, and to whom it will surely be said one day, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me."

ROSA N. CAREY.

CONTENTMENT.

I READ the other day of one
Who, living a secluded life,
Thought how much more he could have done
Had he been placed 'mid this world's strife.

It chanced, ere long, some trifling act
As carpenter he had to do,
And from this seemingly small fact
A lesson for himself he drew.

The business of this nail, he mused,
Is to stay here and to be still.
What should I think if it refused
Or wished some other post to fill?

And may it not be thus with me?
Am not I bidden here to stay?
Why should I seek elsewhere to be,
Or think my own the better way?

Here in submission will I rest,
Doing the work that comes to hand,
Concluding *that* for me is best,
Although it be not great nor grand.

K. F. W.