

STORIES OF THE "LITTLE FOLKS" COTS.—V.



It seems a long time since we went together to pay a visit to our own particular Cots in the East London Hospital for Children. Still, it is not so long as it appears from the day when we last wended our way over the then muddy pavements of crowded Commercial Road, and the less busy haunts of Harding Street and Glamis Road, to look after our little friends. It was a foggy, depressing day, and the hospital looked melancholy. Even its grand, red-faced opposite neighbour, the tall, broad fire-house, seemed downcast; for the pavement was up for repairs, and there was nobody about to admire it—not even the usual little boys playing at marbles. One solitary figure alone paced up and down before the hospital, waiting for admission; and altogether the generally cheerful surroundings seemed desolate.

On entering we found there had been an outbreak of scarlet fever, and that one ward was closed: for our hospital admits no infectious cases, though now and then they occur. It was deemed wisest that we should not leave the ground floor to visit our Cots, therefore we had our journey for nothing. Still not quite for nothing; since we unpacked our unfailing "Bag," and left behind some knitted vests and reel-necklaces, brought that morning by a young friend who was to have accompanied us, but who gave up the long-expected pleasure at the wish of her parents, who had heard of fever somewhere in the East End. Obedience had its reward, as it generally has; for she, too, would have been disappointed.

To-day, however, is bright and dry, though there is the bitterest of east winds, which again prevents the young friend aforesaid joining us; for she has a severe cold, and the youngest reader knows very well that it is imprudent to go out in an east wind with a cold on the chest. So we must go alone; yet not alone, if all the founders of the LITTLE FOLKS Cots will be with us in spirit. We are warmly welcomed by the kind lady superintendent, matron, sisters, and nurses, who all thought we were never coming again; and who now despair of racking their memories for the numerous children who have occupied our Cots during the last twelve months. Referring to books, however, in which each case is briefly entered,

one and another rouses up the sleepy mind, till it gets peopled with children of the past, and we learn, by degrees, all about the sicknesses and names of those suffering little ones who have been tenderly nursed by the loving hands of those who tell their tale.

We will begin with the boys, and are sorry to say that several of the poor little patients died; in other words, were removed from all pain in this world, to that other and better land where they will be for ever with their loving Saviour. The first was named Albert, who was seven months in his little cot, afflicted with hip disease, and who was six years old. The second only tenanted it three days. His name was Willie; but the third was two months before he "went home." James was the pet of the ward, and both doctors and nurses did their best to make him happy. But he was such a grave little fellow that all they could think of would not raise a smile in his large dark eyes. Everybody rejoiced when, at last, a kind doctor performed some trick that brought the smile. Neither could they prevail upon him to talk, though he was two and a half years old; still, he managed to get everything he wanted by pointing his finger so royally, that they called him King James. If he desired the attendance of any particular nurse, he pointed to her, and his majesty was obeyed. Is it not pleasant to think that these young sufferers are removed from their dreary homes, to light, air, and tender treatment? Still, their parents love them and visit them; but they know that in their own over-crowded rooms they could scarcely recover, and are thankful that they should have the care elsewhere which it is not in their power to bestow.

One very touching instance of parental love sanctifies our Cot. Little George's father was engaged in the gas-works all the night, and came to sit by his dying bed all the day; while the mother spent the night beside her child, and the day at her other duties. This for about a week before the angels came to bear him to heaven. He was a dear, patient little boy, and everybody loved him.

But we will now tell of those who recovered. Johnnie was only ill a week of an accident, and went away cured; while Jimmie, who came as pale and quiet as King James, grew quite lively. A kind doctor taught him a game called "Snap," which greatly amused him, as well as the other sick children, and which he, probably, has taught his brothers and sisters by this time. A little German boy of two and a half years left our Cot

quite well, to the great delight of his parents ; and so, we think and hope, will its present tenant, Richard, to whom we are glad to come at last, after listening to this long list of previous occupants.

Richard tells us that he lives in the country, and has two brothers and a sister ; that he is much better, that he is eight years old, that he would greatly like one of the beautiful scrap-books made by his young friends, ever so far away in Yorkshire ; and that he is very happy in the hospital, and everybody is kind to him. We present him with the said scrap-book, upon his assuring us that he does not possess one ; and leave him turning over the well-filled pages. We think we have done with our boy's cot for the present, but are told that its previous tenant is under quarantine elsewhere, for chicken-pox ; so we send him another scrap-book, with our best wishes.

Our young readers will be glad to learn that a splendid scrap-book arrived the other day, inscribed "For the LITTLE FOLKS Cots," and that other gifts have also come for them. We are, however, furnished with presents for the general patients, and are pleased to have another book, full of Christmas-cards, for an afflicted boy who "never had one before." But we are told that yonder is a lad who is always drawing, and how proud we feel to be in possession of a new paint-box, furnished with colours, tiny palettes, and a brush. And how his pale face and large dark eyes light up when we tell him that it is "his very own." Two convalescents, one on crutches, are looking on, but they do not envy him his prize. They seem as pleased as he. We have only a couple of picture-cards for them, because we are in duty bound to keep a portion of our good things for the girls' ward.

Thither we mount, and have to stir up the memories of the good nurses again to be able to give our young friends a "full, true, and particular account" of the poor children who have occupied their second Cot during the past twelve months. Only one has gone from it to "The Better Land." Her name was Lizzie, and although only six years old, she suffered much from heart-disease. But she was very cheerful, and a great pet. She ordered every one about, much as King James did below stairs, only she could use her tongue as well as her fingers. "Lie down, Daniel, you bad boy. I shall tell sister," she was heard to exclaim to a baby in a neighbouring cot, who would sit up and look about him. "I want all my clothes to choose from, and a pair of white gloves," she said to her mother, before the Christmas party. And the fond mother brought such garments as she possessed, and laid them at the foot of her bed. She even

managed to procure an old pair of white gloves, to gratify her dear child. And Lizzie was dressed in her very best, and carried downstairs for the Christmas festivities.

Our patients have very pretty names. We glance down the list and read Ellen, Maud, Alice, Rosanna, Lilian, and Lydia. Ellen came from the country, and was twice in the hospital afflicted with St. Vitus' dance, but she left the second time, cured. Maud, who was thirteen, had been a great help to her mother at home, and brought her ready aid to her invalid companions. The little ones grew very fond of her. When she was better she went to Mellis, the convalescent Home, and when she returned they all flocked round her, and called for her instead of the nurses. Rosanna, also, had been most useful at home, and was greatly troubled because she was not there "to help mother." Poor little Annie cried day and night for her mother, and would not be comforted ; but, happily, she and Lilian were only a short time occupants of our Cot. After all, sisters and nurses have wonderful memories, for, as they look at the cots, they seem to call up each little patient, and to describe her perfectly : and when we think that these are but a tithe of the hundreds who have been under their care during the year, we are thankful for their patience and sympathy. They have sick babies in their arms all the time they are talking to us, and two dear little convalescents tugging at their skirts, who will be attended to.

"They are quite spoilt," laughs the sister, "and run about after the visitors to be noticed."

LITTLE FOLKS Cot No. 2 is at the very top of the room, and when we reach it we are pleased to see several of the convalescents amusing those who are in bed. One rises to make room for us, and we are soon seated by Lydia's side, who is a very communicative little girl, and readily relates her history.

"Please, I'm eight. I have two brothers and two sisters ; no, one sister, and she and me make two. We live at Poplar. I go to Board School and Sunday-school. I learn reading and writing, and sums, and I shall learn to write again when I goes home, for fear of forgetting. I have been here six weeks, and I should have been in the country, at Mellis, now, only my legs were so weak that, when I tried, I couldn't stand. I am very happy, and everybody is so kind. Mother comes to see me every Sunday."

"Oh, no ! I haven't got any scrap-book of my own : I never had none."

We present her with the second artistic production of our Yorkshire friends, and she uplifts her hands with delight as she receives it from us.

"Where will you put it?" we inquire of her.

"In the parlour. We've got a kitchen and a bedroom besides. Will you please to say to the little people that sent me the book, that I'm very much obliged to them, and I'll keep it in the parlour."

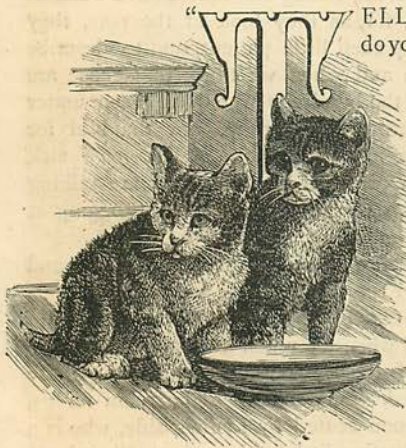
The word "parlour" is quite a surprise, for generally, like "the cobbler that lived in the stall," one room "serves them for parlour, and kitchen and all." Indeed, the kind nurses say that when they sometimes go to visit the children whom they have learnt to love in the hospital, it goes to their hearts to see the poverty in which they find them.

Nevertheless, they treasure up the books and

various gifts bestowed on them by their richer brothers and sisters, and the pretty dolls, toys, pictures, or other ornaments presented to them in the hospital are taken to their dark dwellings, and help to light them up with the bright beams of loving sympathy. Sometimes, also, clothes sent to the hospital reappear in the home; and the knitted vests and petticoats entrusted to us by industrious young people are much appreciated. We have one of the latter with us to-day—all white and red—to say nothing of a couple of beautiful dolls, which rejoice the hearts of two little patients, who "haven't got no doll." They and the writer unite in thanking the warm-hearted young friends who dressed and sent them. ANNE BEALE.

WHO WAS TO BLAME?

THE STORY OF TOPSY'S ADVENTURES.



"MELL me, mamma, do you really think

that pussies have inelives?"

It was little Hilda who put the question, a very momentous one to her, and very serious she appeared as she put it.

Her work had dropped in her lap, and a tear was quivering on her eyelashes, as she waited her mamma's answer. Mamma was busy sewing, for although the summer's day was drawing to a close, there was a good deal to be done ere she could put everything away, ready for use when another day should dawn. This is equivalent to telling you that Hilda's mamma was poor, or if not poor—for no one in this world can be called poor to whom God grants health and the means to earn a living—she had to work for her daily bread, and an amiable and quiet industrious little assistant was her daughter Hilda, though not quite twelve years of age.

The room in which sat the widow and her child was the quintessence of neatness and cleanliness, the ornaments on the mantelshelf were not

numerous, but well chosen, the grate shone like polished ebony, or like the face of a blackamoor boy when pleased. The furniture was plain but orderly, there was a fresh flower on the table, and dickie in his nice clean cage was singing his evening song, and occasionally helping himself to a few seeds, because he knew that presently his little mistress would put a shawl over the cage, and then he must go to sleep.

But for all this Hilda was not perfectly happy, and hence the question, "Have cats nine lives, mamma?"

"Nine lives, child?" said her mother, "I really don't know what put that in your head."

"Because," said Hilda, "people say they have, and if it isn't merely their fun, then Topsy may live after all; and if she does, she shall never, never, never be allowed to go out again all night."

Topsy and the canary were Hilda's two pets, and although pussy was very young—hardly a year old—she and the bird had lived together on the most amiable terms, for the canary often got out of the cage for exercise, as all birds ought to, and used to perch on Hilda's head and sing, the while Topsy sat on her shoulder and purred a kind of dreamy bass. I'm sure that both dickie and Topsy were extremely fond of their mistress. Topsy had many ways in which she could show her affection; the canary could only sing, or, as he often did, gaze pertly at his mistress, first with one black bead of an eye, and then with the other.

"Peet! peet!" the bird would say on these occasions. "I love you every bit as much as Topsy