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Children's Free Hospital

1890

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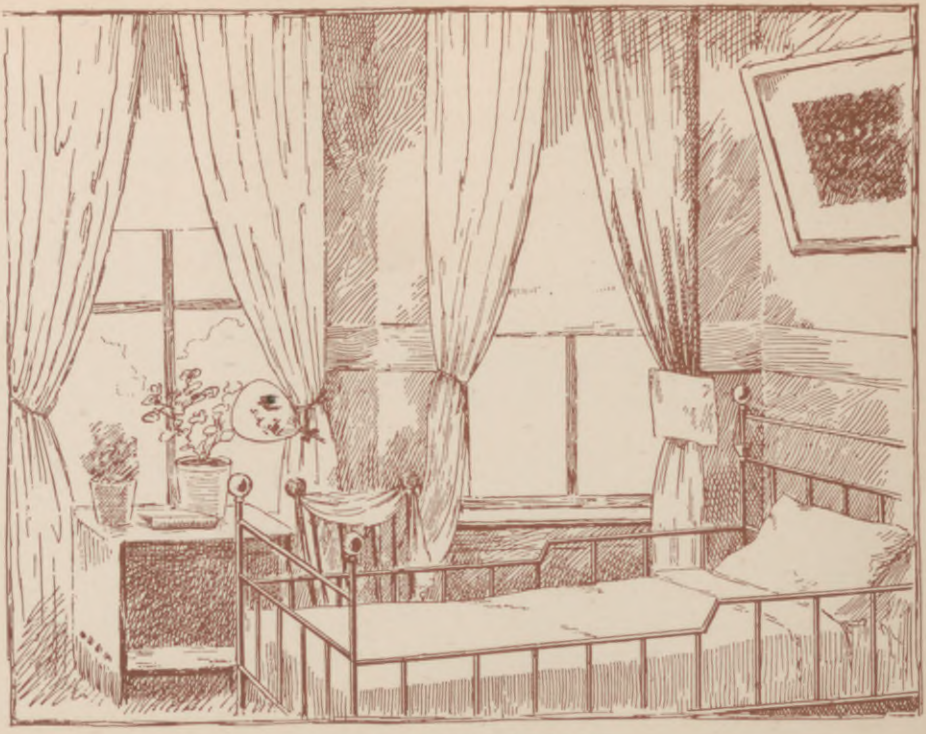

LITTLE MAUDE'S ROOM.

(IN THE HOSPITAL.)

"LITTLE MAUD."

At rest March 15, 1890.

THERE is to-day an empty cot in the bay-window-room. The room is bright and cheerful, but the flowers which always stood on the little bed-side table have disappeared, the pretty trinkets and ornaments, always so neatly kept and lovingly treasured are gone, and they who enter the room speak reverently of "the little one" who has left us, and the name of "Little Maud" will linger long in the memories of those who knew her. A child? yes, a little child—but a woman in

patient endurance, a heroine in fortitude. For fifteen long months this was her home, here through long days and nights of pain she fought the battle of life, until at last the tired eyelids closed and the little hands were folded in rest. They who watched and loved her saw her failing day by day, but always found her gentle and uncomplaining, a kind word or act ever brought a grateful smile to her lips even when her eyes were dim with tears—a smile, which like a sunbeam breaking through a rifted cloud, gladdened the hearts of all who saw it.

The last two or three days were weary days of waiting, she knew her strength was failing and that her work here was finished. She was sorry, she said, that she could not have finished the presents she was making "but—and the feeble voice trembled, "I had *so many* to make." Realizing the end was near she looked forward with hope and joy to the time of her release. At times a look of inquiry came into her eyes, and they who bent to catch the feeble words heard the question "do you think it will be long?"—she was *so* tired—and then at times when every effort to give her rest had failed, she would ask "could you hold me in your lap a little while or are you too tired?"

So tired—the day before the end, wearied by waiting and suffering, she cried a little and then looked up and said, "I ought to be glad that I

am only tired and that there is nothing else the matter with me;" in the days that were past she had suffered so much that she felt she ought to be thankful that she was "only tired."

Death kindly came at last and "kissed the tired eyelids down," and they who stood beside the cot said not, "the child is dead," but smiling through their tears, they turned and whispered—"she is at rest."

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"The old, old fashion—Death! Oh thank God, all who see it, for that older fashion yet, of Immortality! And look upon us, angels of young children, with regards not quite estranged, when the swift river bears us to the ocean!"

HOW HE GOT BACK.

HE WAS a very sick boy when he came to us, and for days his life seemed to hang upon a thread. A motherless boy, and evidently one who had been obliged to fight his way into life—one to whom a kind word or act was something unknown. Through his long continued delirium he displayed continually a spirit of obstinacy and combativeness that could not be overcome. As his convalescence advanced and became

established, kind words and treatment seemed to awaken in him a different spirit, and he became more gentle and tractable. Toward the little ones he manifested a spirit of love; and when he was able to sit up in a wheel-chair and be rolled out into the halls he would ask for a baby to be given to him and would sit by the hour caring for, and fondling it; to the larger boys he continued a terror, and woe betide the boy who imposed upon a smaller one in his presence—his fist was all ready to arbitrate such matters. His convalescence was slow and he remained with us a long time. But at last he was well and strong and the time for his discharge came. He went unwillingly, and privately told his room-mate that he would be back again soon.

The same evening one of the visiting staff was called up by telephone and told that the boy who had been discharged that morning was very sick, and the person telephoning wanted to send him back to the hospital. After enquiring about the symptoms of the case, the Doctor replied that he hardly thought it necessary to take the case to the hospital but that he would have some one see the boy in the morning; he was seen in the morning and the report given was that the boy was not sick. The next morning when the Doctor "made his rounds" through the hospital he

found the boy snugly and comfortably tucked up in bed in the room with his old friend—he had "got back."

Doctors are of course supposed to be ready for all emergencies and are never astonished, whatever may happen, but the usual placidity of mind of this particular member of the profession was somewhat disturbed. Turning to the head-nurse he asked, "how did this boy get here," and received this report: "Last evening the ambulance was called out on a 'fast call' to bring in a boy who had fallen in a fit at the corner of — & — Sts., and had broken or hurt his leg; on its return this boy was brought in."

A careful examination revealed the fact that there was nothing wrong with him—a case of homesickness for the hospital. The Doctor said very seriously: "Having fallen and hurt himself there is great danger of inflammation setting in. Put him in a darkened room, shut the door and keep him on fluid diet" (milk and beef tea.) The next morning he reported himself better and wanted the door left open; the succeeding morning he said he was all right and wanted something to eat. He was allowed to get up and after a day or two was discharged.

A PEEP INSIDE.

NO WORDS of ancient magician were half so potent to cast a spell and cheat the senses as is the "Les' Pretend" of the children's plays.

For at its magic utterance unreality takes full command. The wooden sword and paper cap become a flashing blade and plumed helmet, while the boy tingling all through with martial ardor and with vivid imaginings, storms castles and puts to flight whole armies of unseen foes. The sawdust stuffed doll, with staring china eyes, becomes a "truly meat baby," and looks lovingly into the face of its rudimentary mother who croons as she rocks it to sleep, or as often disciplines it in remembrance of her own recent experience. The cobwebbed garret expands to

gorgeous apartments, with faultless furnishings, where stately ladies interchange visits in long, trailing gowns, and tell of trials with servants or dressmakers, and gravely compare the ills of their children, and gossip with a fervor worthy of riper years. The upturned chair becomes in turn a rushing fire engine or a softly-rocking pleasure boat, and the little ones enjoy far better these fancies of their busy brains than they ever afterward do the reality, though it comes to them larger and brighter than their childish fancies could suggest. And who shall say, but that in the love of the little ones for a good time some half-unconscious remembrance may remain of the perfect joys of paradise before they became "of the earth earthy."

Any one who imagines the Children's Free Hospital is a retreat of quiet, darkened rooms, and noiseless gliding nurses, would be happily undeceived should they look into the large, bright play room where "Les' Pretend" holds full sway. The rocking horse, *sans* legs and tail, gallops furiously away with its cowboy rider, in pursuit of Indians, or ambles quietly along some shady lane with a country doctor on his daily rounds. The pen in the corner becomes a happy home with father, mother and children, all entering heartily into the play, and several small

babies in the carriages, or sprawling on the floor, give a realism to the home scene, and join their voices in the general uproar. Often the players draw their inspiration from their surroundings, and the small doctor makes his rounds, the white-capped nurse gives "pretend" medicine, and the make-believe patients tell of most peculiar and trying symptoms. Very recently a small boy was discovered kneeling by a doll's crib, in a corner by himself, and when questioned as to his doings announced, he was having an "operation," and he had succeeded with a pair of dull-pointed scissors in amputating the leg of one of the numerous dolls. Fierce ambulance races are run, the drivers urging their horses to the top of their speed to be first at the scene of the accident.

These little pitchers have the proverbial ears and soon pick up medical terms enough to satisfy a moderately ambitious doctor.

So their food becomes "diet;" "dressing," comes to mean the attention to their wounds, not the putting on of clothes; the doctor's visits "rounds;" a distinction is made between splints and braces; and "A. C." and "P. C." medicines are freely talked of. One little girl was very indignant because she did not have a "half day off" as the nurses did. The nurses in the "pretend" hospital always have "an hour off."

For an hour or so each day their play is systematized under the direction of a trained kindergarten teacher, and they quickly learn form and colors and reproduce them with tinted crayons on their drawing-boards very perfectly for such little ones. They most enjoy the lively marching songs, and the little iron-bound foot keeps time with the tapping crutch as they circle around the large room. While they are eminently democratic in their intercourse with each other still there is a sort of aristocracy among them, and the boy who has nothing but eczema or paralysis would gladly trade and give boot with the boy who has a trouble that requires an operation which will make the blood come. Coming as the children do from all kinds of homes, it would seem that there would be constant friction and quarrels, but such rarely happen, and new-comers quickly fall in line and join heartily in the sports. Those who are too sick to join the plays look out with longing eyes from their beds at their more fortunate companions, and the merry laugh and chatter of the convalescents help them to forget their own bad feelings, and acts as a strong cordial toward their recovery. And so the children come, and so the children go, but go bearing with them the impression of their hospital life, which will always

remain with them, and perchance change the whole tenor of their lives. And as the years go on, more and more will they hold in grateful remembrance those who cared for them so tenderly, and those other ones who, remembering the words of the Master: "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of these, my little ones, ye have done it unto me," have given of their substance so abundantly that the care and help become possible.

A QUESTION ANSWERED.

"Oh it was pitiful
Near a whole city full—"

"DO WE need a hospital for children?" was asked of a physician. In answer he said: "About four years ago a gentleman telephoned asking me to go to a certain number on Gratiot Ave.; in explanation he said that a woman who cared for his office and other offices in the same building had not put in an appearance for several days and he had heard that she had several children sick with diphtheria and that they were very poor. I went, found the number, climbed up a narrow stairway and then passing through a dark, narrow hallway, I found the place, two

small rooms, one a dark bedroom and the other a kitchen. In the bedroom was the only bed in the house and on it was stretched the emaciated, wretchedly clad body of a girl—dead from diphtheria. In the other room, around a broken stove, in which a little fire struggled and glimmered, lying on boxes, covered with old clothes were four other children, sick with the same dread disease. Two broken chairs, an old table and an *empty* cupboard completed the furnishing of the room. To the question what nourishment have you given these children, the mother answered 'I bought five cents worth of beef yesterday and made them some broth.'

"Under such circumstances it was hard to see where to begin or what to do to make them comfortable and to give them a chance for their life—there was no place to take them.

"About two years ago, a visit was made to another part of the city. After some difficulty the place was found—a wretched house bare and comfortless. On a ragged, broken lounge, drawn up close to the stove, crouched a girl, her hands stretched out over the stove, seeking for a little warmth, her face so swollen from erysipelas that it had almost lost all semblance of humanity. A crutch lying beside her proclaimed her a cripple—a victim of hip-joint disease. Two other thinly-clad, shivering

children stood beside her. To the question 'What have you fed these children,' the mother answered 'I boiled some corn meal in water for them, I get three pounds for five cents.' The ambulance was called and within an hour the sick girl was in a comfortable bed in the Children's Hospital."

A VISITOR.

FORT WAYNE, DETROIT, April 3, 1890.

DARLING MOTHER:

I must write and tell you about my two visits to the Children's Hospital, which were so interesting. The first time I went we only went to the children's part, as strangers were not allowed to pass through the grown-up people's ward except to see some friend of theirs. As I had never been to a hospital before you may be sure I was very anxious to see what it was like. What I expected to see was a long room full of narrow beds with thin, suffering children in them. Instead of that when we first went in there was a nice wide hall with doors on each side of it; with a sofa there, also some chairs. There was one boy, who was lame, sitting in a bath chair. He looked quite bright and happy. There was also another boy who did not seem quite right in his head, and he would not play with the other boys but wandered around by himself. Then we

went into the play-room where there were lots of babies and little children playing. One poor boy had his legs strapped up very tightly. I wondered what it was for. My friend told me it was to make his legs straight. Another boy had his foot turned right around, and it seemed to be very hard for him to walk. Most of them seemed to be on crutches, but they all seemed very happy and good. Then we went into the Nursery where there were some babies asleep, also one or two little girls. One little baby woke up and began to cry, but I played with it until it began to laugh; but when we went away it began to cry again, so that I could hardly leave it. Then we went by a room where there was a boy that had a bad eye and so had to stay all alone for fear of the other boys catching it, which seemed very hard as he could not read or look at anything much. Then we came to the room that I liked best of all and felt more sorry for the inmate than for all the others. It was a bright, clean room, and in the windows were several pretty flowers, and on the walls were some nice pictures which made it look very bright. There, in a nice clean bed, lay a poor little girl, about 11 years old I should think. She was hunch-backed and her poor little chest was very high, and it seemed very hard for her to breathe; she looked very thin and white. So thin that you could hardly see her wrists which were only

skin and bones. She looked so hot and tired, and did not seem to be able to be comfortable, but she seemed very glad to see us. I could not say anything, as I felt so sorry for her. My friend said, I think, that she had been sick for six years and could not get any better. We talked a little while, but had to go soon, as it was getting late. All the children said good-bye to us, and then we went home. I could not think of anything else for two or three days, as I had expected to see such a different scene from what I had. It was so nice to think of them all being so comfortable. So now I have told you about my first visit to the hospital, and I think I had better begin about my second one. Of course things were a little more natural to me. Oh, I forgot to tell you that a few days after, I heard that poor little Maude, the hunch-back child, was dead. I felt so sorry; but still she was taken away from all her suffering. Well, the second time I went we first went into a room where the kindergarten was going on. I was very much amused as I had never seen it before. The first thing we saw were about eight little children going around the room marching, with their teacher in front of them. They were singing a little song, and every minute they would all clap their hands. They all seemed to enjoy it very much, and it looked very pretty, though you could hardly hear anything except the teacher,

to whom I took a great fancy. After that they did all kinds of different things. Then the teacher showed us some of the work they had done; such as drawing, string beads and making flowers on cardboard with pretty colored thread and a needle. One little boy gave my friend a very pretty flower worked on cardboard that he had worked himself. Then we went into little Maud's room, which was so clean and bright; but there were no flowers in the window, and also no little white face in the bed. There was one little baby who had a very sore face and could not see us — it was blind, and it was also not right in its mind. Then we looked around a little at the pictures and books of the different children in which they took much pride. There was only one boy left that I had seen in my first visit; he was the one not quite right in his mind, but he seemed much better. Then we said good-bye to them all, and that is the last of my delightful visits to the hospital.

FLORENCE M. WILSON.

SAULT STE. MARIE, Ont.

A LITTLE PHILOSOPHER.

"LITTLE Maud" who was with us so many months, and by whose bedside so many of us—old and young—learned a lesson of patient endurance, was an economical little woman, who had the interest of the hospital thoroughly at heart. At times during those long months her appetite failed her and it was difficult to find anything the child could relish.

At one of these times, when suggestion after suggestion as to "what would be nice" had failed, it was said, "but Maud you are fond of white grapes and you must have some every day." She answered "we can't be spending the hospital money for grapes every day, for it do be costing *so much* to buy dressings, and bandages and things"—nevertheless she had the grapes.

A few months before her death a splint was made for her; it was rather an elaborate affair of steel rods, cushions and padded straps to support the weight of the body, an arm also extending upwards to support the head, it enabled her to sit up more comfortably in her wheel-chair, but its cost was evidently a weight on the child's mind. The day before her death, when she was waiting for the end and only asking "Will it be long?" she fell into a troubled sleep and they, who watched her lovingly—tearfully—prayed that it might not be long.

After a little she wakened and looking up said "I hope my splint will fit somebody."

The children have a perfect faith in the restorative power of an operation. As one of the nurses looked in the play room one morning she saw a little convalescent trying to climb up into a chair while little Charley stood by an interested spectator. "Look out Charley" she said, "the baby will fall and break its back." "Never mind" was the reply, "it can have an operation."

The child who is to have, or has had an operation is the hero or heroine of the hour, an object of respect and envy of all the other children.

"The children are very loyal to their own Physician and are ever ready to assert his superiority over all other Doctors on the face of the

earth ; knowing this, the Superintendent was much astonished one day to be told by one of the "little ones" "that he wanted to have another doctor. "Why?" she asked. "Cause my doctor has never taken me to the operating room" was the answer.

PRATTLINGS.

"SUPPOSING all the children upon earth were to die, would the flowers, and the water, and the sky be sorry?" asks the little child in Dickens' story of the "Child's dream of a star."

It would be too sad a world for the flowers to bloom in, and the pretty brooks would never sing any more sweet songs, and the skies would shed bitter tears over such a sad earth, but thanks be to God, the children live to brighten our lives, and to make our hearts warm and glad, and even hospital children live and are merry and funny some times.

There was great excitement among the little patients of The Children's Free Hospital, when it became known they were to have a Kindergarten, and much wonderment as to what it was. One day Miss

Parker heard great shouting in the play room; when she went in, the children cried out, "Oh! the Kindergarten has come!" A strange looking covered wagon was standing at the back door, near the play room window.

Willie Davis, had his foot operated on one day, and when he was brought back to his room Bella Ellwood, who occupied a bed in the same room, cried bitterly for fear she would "catch the operation." The children have a funny play called "Ambulance," which they play after they are in bed, while the blankets are being distributed for the night. The one who gets a *blue blanket*, is "Grace Ambulance" and the one who gets a *red blanket*, is "Harper Ambulance." Of course there is a great strife for the *red blankets*, as they prefer to be "Harper," then they go through the form of receiving a patient into the hospital. What imitators these little people are!

The children are all very partial to their own doctor and think he is the best. They discuss their merits, from the horses they drive, to the clothes they wear, and I know of no pleasanter sight, than to see these good physicians who give so generously of their time and skill, going about the hospital ministering to their little patients. Mohamet once said "that if he had two loaves of bread he would sell one and buy

hyacinths, for they would feed his soul"—alas some of us have only one loaf, and hyacinths are beyond our reach, but we can at least "give a cup of cold water to one of His little ones."

MAGGIE.

PERHAPS in all the great gallery of portraits which Dickens has added to our literature, there is no more life-like and pathetic figure than that of "Maggie" in Little Dorrit. Only a genius could have made that strange, uncouth, half-witted creature a touching plea for a great charity. With her large head, and pale face, her light eyes, and foolish smile, there seems nothing to attract our sympathy, or enlist our pity; but when in a few masterly strokes the great humorist draws her picture, he goes beyond such superficial distinctions standing on the broad ground of human nature.

Maggie was a little, neglected waif of London streets, an orphan living with an old drunken grandmother, who beat and ill-used her.

When she was ten years old, exposure, and want, and cruelty, brought on a bad fever. Now I know it is not scientific to describe any illness under such a title, but Dickens is responsible for it, and I cannot, as the politicians say, "go behind the returns." Strangely enough this terrible illness was the one bright spot in her wretched life, she was taken to *the hospital*, and it was to her like Paradise!

"Such beds there is there," cried Maggie. "Such lemonades! Such oranges! Such d'licious broth and wine! Such *chicking!* Oh! *Aint* it a delightful place to go and stop at?"

Recovering from the fever, but with a brain permanently weak and childish, poor Maggie returned to her only home, the streets of London. Again she endures the cold, the hunger, the cruel blows, the bitter hardships of the lowest poverty—but ever in the dwarfed brain remains the beautiful memory of her only happiness: "Oh! how nice it was! What a *ev'nly* place!"

Once, at least, in her wretched life, she had lain in a soft, clean bed, she had eaten nourishing, tempting food, quenched her feverish thirst with fruit or lemonade, heard the kind voices of nurse or doctor, and felt the vivifying warmth of human love.

Do you wonder that she never forgot it? That lying in a garret on dirty straw, half covered with a torn quilt, eating cold potatoes and dry

bread, washed down with muddy London water, or crouching under the blows of the drunken old virago, her grandmother, she longed for any disease, any physical suffering which would restore the beautiful dream?

We are so constituted that one definite human being appeals to us more strongly than a whole class which we but vaguely discern, so I give you this one forlorn figure, drawn in a few bold lines by the strong hand of him who it is said "first showed the slums of London to its drawing-rooms."

If Dickens fails to enlist your sympathy for the class of whom poor Maggie is but a type, it is useless for me to try.

Still, I will add one suggestion, charity is a more complicated thing than it once was; we are often troubled by the fear that we may be helping those who ought to help themselves, that we may by imprudent benevolence encourage idleness and lower self-respect. With the Children's Hospital we have no such fears, helpless and innocent its inmates appeal to us by no fault of their own.

Shall we not each of us lend a helping hand, that these poor little sufferers may find the "'ospital a 'ev'nly place," and remember it with life-long gratitude, like poor Maggie?