CONFESSIONS OF A TRAINED NURSE

I Found Her in a Little Huddled Heap

WHEN I came back to the club, toward the end of August, from a three months out of town case, I found it practically deserted. This is the slack season, the majority of people who can afford to employ nurses being away, and at this time of year, when a nurse finds herself at liberty, she seldom sits down and waits for a case, but takes herself off for a real holiday, so that she may be refreshed for the annual typhoid crop which returning travelers bring home with them about the middle of September. But I had had an easy summer and I was saving up for a trip to Europe in the spring, so, though the registrar assured me there had not been a call in a week, I wrote my name on the slate, rather enjoying the unique distinction of being first and last on the list.

For a day or two I puttered around, putting my wardrobe in order, writing letters and luxuriating in going to bed early and getting up late—in short, doing exactly as I pleased, which may be selfish, but is also restful. One afternoon, coming in from a peaceful stroll in the park, I was met at the door by the registrar, who informed me that the Jones maternity hospital had just telephoned for a nurse to report there at once for special duty.

"You didn't say I'd go, did you?" I asked her in dismay. "I don't like hospital specialing; besides, you know I abominate obstetrics!"

"Yes, Miss Hardie, I know that, but this comes under the head of an emergency. You know the maternity will employ only registered nurses for its private patients, and it seems that you're about the only one on call anywhere. The patient has just been admitted, and they're in a great hurry for you."

"Bother!" I cried, but I wasted no more time in talking, ran up to my room for my valise and was down again before she had time to erase my name from the slate.

As I rode down town I felt anything but cheerful. I had not been inside the maternity since my training in that branch of nursing. It was good training, and professionally I do not regret it, but it robbed me of my illusions. I had seen much suffering and sorrow, but that had but soitened me and enlarged my sympathies. At the maternity I came face to face with sin—sometimes ashamed, and that I could understand and condone, but more often flaunting, and that sickened and turned me.

If I could I would restrict the patients of all maternity hospitals to the respectable poor, or to those unfortunates who, falling once, may, in their lapse from virtue, find both their undoing and their making. Never, never, should an unmarried woman's name be allowed on its books a second time! Cared for at the expense of the city, which also stands ready to take their unwanted children off their hands, a premium is thus set upon vice. I stiffen now, at the mere recollection of it, as I did once, when I heard one of these patients say to another: "Hello, Miss Smith! I seen you here last year, didn't I?" for the beautiful mystery of motherhood was degraded into an ugly thing by the repulsive leer with which the other responded, laughing coarsely: "Sure! And I guess we'll meet here on the old campin' ground next spring!"

I would have prolonged my ride if I could have conscientiously, but within a quarter of an hour I left the car and presently passed from the noise and glare of the hot street into the quiet and shaded white marble coolness of the hospital, where the superintendent of nurses received me with cordiality.

"Ah, Miss Hardie! I am glad to see you. There's a sweet little patient for you in room No. 32—Mrs. Todd. Her husband is with her, but they are expecting you, so go right up. You know the way to the dressing room."

Having put on my uniform, I reported to the nurse in charge of the floor, and was by her conducted to room No. 32. Mr. Todd answered my knock, and upon my being introduced he stepped out into the hall for a moment to talk to me. We exchanged a few commonplaces until the floor nurse was out of earshot, and then Mr. Todd, who, I was aware, had been mentally taking my measure, held out his hand to me as one man might to another. As I took it there was an understanding in our grip, a silent compact.

"She is very young," he faltered. "I am nearly twice her age."

"Her youth will help her," I answered.

"Thank you! You give me hope!"

He opened the door for me, and I preceded him into the room. Pacing up and down its length, with short, restless step, was a fair young girl who might have sat for a portrait of Una. She apparently did not notice me until her husband said in gentle reminder:

"Dear Elsie, here is your nurse—Miss Hardie has come!"

Then she paused in her walk and looked around with a startled air, like a deer surprised in its forest retreat by a sudden approach. I went up to her, and because she was so young, so untried, I could not greet her formally. A caress seemed more fitting, and so, instinctively my arm slipped around her protectingly, and though at first there was a flurried movement as of flight, the next instant her head was on my shoulder and I was soothing her as though she were a baby. She was trembling, and I did not wonder. Her supreme test was at hand, and her preparation for it in the school of life was all too scant—she was barely out of the kindergarten, with its games and songs, and the lesson was too hard for her.

She clung to me, and presently I persuaded her to lie down and rest. I sat beside her, and her little hand nestled into mine. Mr. Todd came and looked down at us both with a relieved expression.

"I think Miss Hardie's coddling is what you needed, little girl!" he cried, flashing a grateful glance at me.

"Dear Hugh!" she whispered, tenderly patting his cheek as he bent over her. "You have been so sweet and patient all along."

He kissed her softly on the forehead.

"I hope so, darling. How could I be anything else to you? But"—he turned to me—"in a time like this no man, not even her husband, can be to a woman what a woman can. Now, as never before, she needs her mother!"

"And yours can not be with you?" I asked my patient.

She shook her head sadly.

"She is dead."

Her fingers responded to my pressure.

"And you have no near friend that we can send for?"

Mr. Todd answered for her.

"We are strangers here. Our home is in England, where we hope to return next spring. We have been in the States since the first of the year, as my business required my presence here. We have spent much of the time traveling, and so have not been here long enough to make even acquaintances. It has been very hard for her, poor child!"

"I don't feel so lonely now," she said, bravely. "I know Miss Hardie is going to be such a comfort."

I flushed. Never had I been so strongly drawn to any one as I was to her, and it was pleasant to feel that the attraction was mutual.

"Do you object to my spoiling her?" I inquired of her husband. "I have a premonition that she is going to upset all my ideas of discipline. I shouldn't be surprised if she hoodwinked me into letting her read her temperature chart before she is through with me!"

It was 7 o'clock when Mr. Todd went to his hotel for dinner and 9 when he came back. I heard the elevator when it stopped, and, guessing that he was its passenger, I went out to meet him.

"Good news, Mr. Todd!" I cried. "The stork alighted almost before the flapping of its wings! Mrs. Todd is doing beautifully, and you have a fine little daughter."

Mr. Todd's harassed look changed to one of beaming joy.

"By jove! Thank you! That's jolly good news! I didn't dare hope for it so soon. May I see her—or must I wait?"

I laughed.

"As if you could wait! Come along—she is asking for you!"

I went in with him. My patient was half asleep, but she roused at our approach, and as she stretched up her arms to her husband there was such a revealing light in both their faces that I closed my eyes lest I should see farther into their souls than a third person should.

"Miss Hardie! The baby, please!" said Mrs. Todd, and though her voice had a faraway sound there was a ring of pure happiness in it.

I brought the baby to her, but she motioned me to give it to Mr. Todd. He looked frightened and glanced from his big hands to the little flannelly bundle that I held out to him.

"I don't dare!" he protested. "I might break it."

"Please, dear! You promised!" begged his wife.

"Must I? Well, then!"

Awkwardly enough he took her from me, but she did not waken, and, gaining confidence, he hugged her to him, then reverently laid her for the first time in her mother's arms, and I was glad that he did not leave to me this privilege, which is by right the father's, and no one's else.

Those first two weeks were wonderful ones for the girl mother, and they were scarcely less wonderful for me. Elsie—she insisted upon my calling her that—was overflowing with joy. The little new life that had sprung from her own seemed to have taken nothing from her youth, but rather had added to it. When the baby—such a dainty, roseleaf of a baby as she was!—lay upon her breast, she was radiant. At such moments I could not look away from her. Once she noticed my riveted gaze and asked me why I was staring so at her.

"Because your face glows so with happiness, dear Elsie!" I answered. And she cried laughingly:

"It's because I am a miser! That's horrid gloating that you see. It's just because I have something of my own—my very own!" she went on, snuggling her cheek against Miss Baby's downy head.

Mr. Todd was devotion itself and all the time he could spare from business he spent with her, but there were many hours when she had no other companionship than mine, and we became well acquainted with each other, and we did not get talked out, for we had much in common, and, besides, there was always the dear baby as a topic of conversation.

The day the baby was two weeks old was a gala occasion, for it was also Elsie's nineteenth birthday and her first wedding anniversary. Mr. Todd arrived before Elsie had had her breakfast, waylaying me in the serving room with gifts and flowers for her tray, and her delighted surprise well repaid him for his trouble. There seemed to be not a cloud on their horizon, and yet even then there must have been on its way a letter which lay harmlessly in the mail bag but which was to have the effect of a bomb cast in our midst.

It was only a few days later that Mr. Todd, coming in for his usual evening call, seemed preoccupied and worried. Elsie was sitting up for him in state on the lounge, and she looked very lovely in her pink silk dressing gown, her mass of golden hair coiled low on her shapely neck and her blue eyes shining as they always did when he arrived. She held up her face and he gave her the expected kiss, but as I arose to go—it is a tactless nurse that stays with her patients when they have visitors—he detained me.

"One minute, if you please, Miss Hardie! Thank you! I find that I shall have to leave the city a week from Saturday. Do you think that Elsie will be able to travel then?"

"I should think so. That will be—let me see—her twenty-sixth day, and she has had no drawbacks. But the doctor will have to decide."

"Quite so! Quite so! But I am very anxious to take her with me and I simply wanted to get your opinion."

"Going away, Hugh? I thought we were to be here all winter."

"So did I! I hoped so! But—I have been recalled to England."

"To England?" she cried. "Home!" And as I left them alone I wondered if it could be a trick of my hearing that made her tone sound tragic, instead of exulting.

I do not know how long Mr. Todd remained, for he must have forgotten to ring for me, as was his custom when departing. I waited in the reception room for an hour, and then, as it was time for Elsie to go to bed, I went in. I found her in a little huddled heap on the couch, sobbing as if her heart would break—great tearless sobs they were, and they filled me with a choking anxiety.

"Elsie, dear child! It is I—Miss Hardie! What is the matter? Oh, don't! don't!"

But she paid no attention to me. What could have happened? Sixty minutes ago she was blithe and care free. Now she was bowed and broken. But she could not be allowed to go on like this. I darted over to the bassinet, picked up the sleeping baby and laid her down beside her mother. Elsie quieted for an instant. She strained her child to her breast and devoured her with hungry eyes.

"I love her so! I love her so, already! I can't live without her! Oh! I can't! I can't!" she moaned.

"What do you mean, dear Elsie? What foolish notion have you got in your little heart? Why, she's going to grow up to be such a comfort to you! You must not worry about her. I never saw a healthier baby!"

Mentally Taking My Measure

But she only sighed heavily.

"You don't understand, Miss Hardie. My husband has been recalled to England. We've got to go home! And we can't take her with us! We've got—to—leave her—here!"

"Nonsense!"—I spoke sharply to discourage her hysterical fancy. "Why should you? A sea voyage won't hurt her."

"No, the voyage won't hurt her," she repeated, dully.

"Of course not! Such a great big strong girl can go anywhere her little bit of a mother can!" I cried briskly. "Why, she could easily pass for six or seven weeks old!"

"That's the trouble!" wailed Elsie. "If only she were a tiny, puny thing, we could manage."

At her words, vague though they were, a cold dread crept over me. But I would not yield to its blighting influence—not yet. I looked at her sweet face—surely it was as innocent as the little one at which she was gazing. I thought of Mr. Todd—a clean man if ever there was one. I touched her softly on the shoulder.

"Let me put baby back in her crib," I begged, "and then tell me all about it. I want to help!"

Her dry eyes filled with tears as she yielded the baby to me.

"You dear!" she murmured. "Miss Hardie, I hoped you loved me, and now I know you do!"

We talked together quietly for a long time. She told me that Mr. Todd had been married before—to her own sister. That was when Elsie was only 6 years old. Then, when she was but 7, she was left an orphan, with no near relatives save only this married sister, in whose home she found a welcome refuge. When Elsie was 13 her sister died, but Elsie and her old nurse stayed on in her brother in law's house, quite as though she were the daughter of it. And there Elsie grew up, looking upon Hugh as her guardian and natural protector and he regarding her as his ward, a precious bequest from his wife. That relationship continued between them until a little more than a year ago. Then there was a subtle change. Hugh knew what it was, but kept his knowledge to himself, hoping that she would not understand.

But her nurse's sudden death brought things to a climax. Then, with no one to chaperon her, he felt that he could not let her live under the same roof with him, and he told her he was going to send her to a distant cousin of hers in Scotland, and he told her why. The thought of separation from him was intolerable to her. He had been father and mother to her, and now she knew that he was sweetheart, too, and she could not go away and put him out of her life.

He tried to reason with her, tried to get her to travel without him for a few months, until he could join her in America, and then he would marry her, but she, who had always been so docile, would not listen to him, and in desperation, against his own better judgment, he consented to let her remain, and they were married at once in a little out of the way place by a strange clergyman who knew nothing about their antecedents. Morally this ceremony was binding, but legally it had no force, for in England at that time a man might not marry his deceased wife's sister. And so they had to keep their wedding a secret.

When Elsie reached this point a light began to dawn upon me, and presently she made everything clear to me.

When it became imperative that he should proclaim to the world that she had a right to bear his name he sent her with friends to this country, then announced his intention of marrying her and followed her a fortnight later, going through a second ceremony with her the day of his landing in New York and sending notices of it to the London papers. That was in January, and all would have been well if they could have put off their return to England for another six months, but Mr. Todd's unexpected recall upset all their calculations.

"We—can't—explain," Elsie sobbed. "If we said she was a premature baby nobody would believe it—she is such a fine, healthy girl! Hugh doesn't care for himself, but he couldn't bear to have me treated coldly, and, besides, for baby's sake, because of the inheritance laws or something we must never let anybody in England know our real wedding day. He says baby can't go home just yet, and I don't know what to do! Oh, I don't know what to do."

I sat thinking.

"You can not stay here with baby for a few months?"

"I thought of that—but Hugh thinks I ought to go with him." She smiled faintly. "He says he'd worry about me as much as if I were a baby, too, if he left me behind."

"I wonder"——I began slowly, then stopped.

She leaned forward eagerly.

"Yes! dear Miss Hardie. Go on! Go on!"

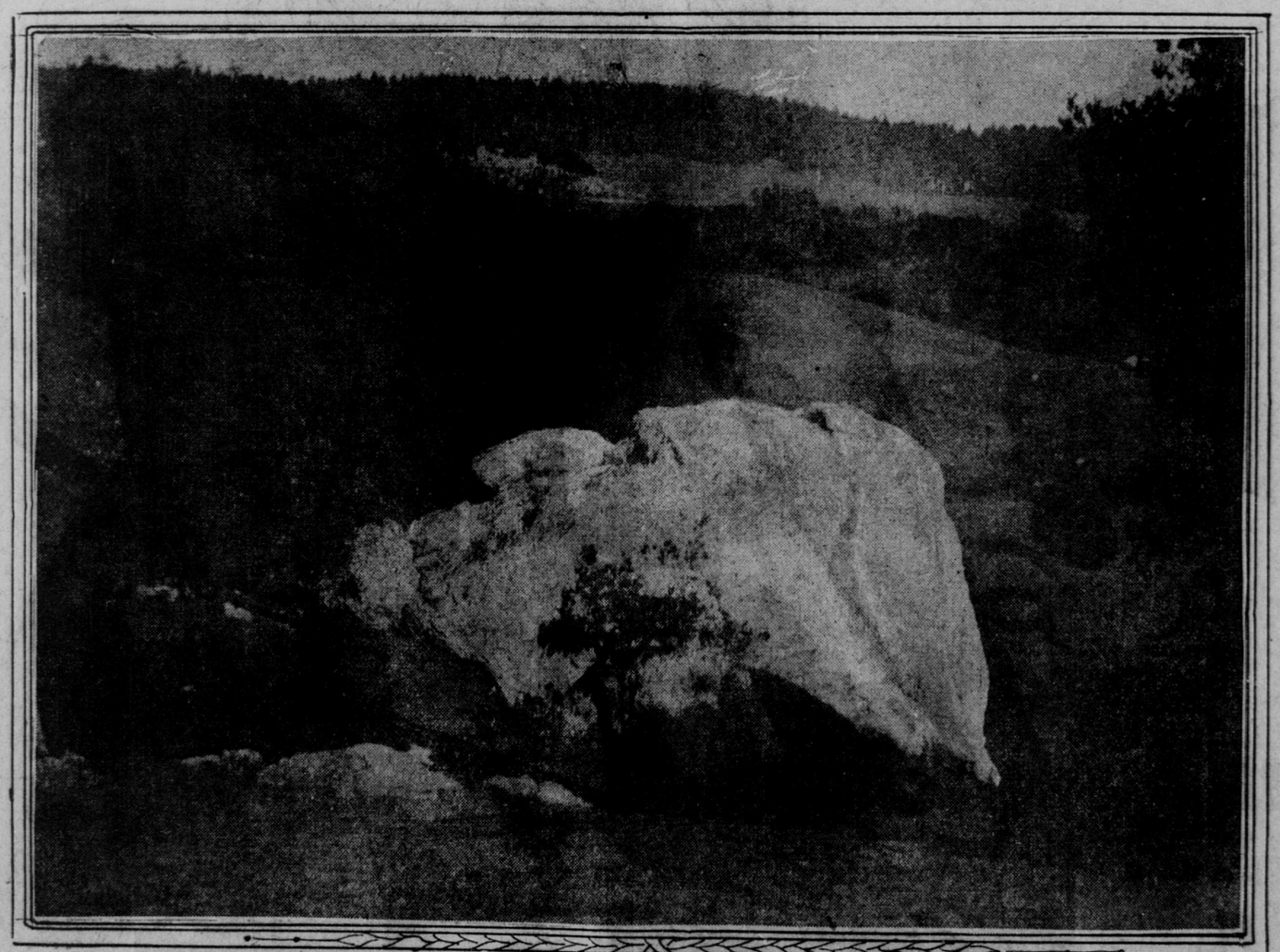
Still I hesitated. I loved this little patient of mine, her baby had already pre-empted a large corner of my heart, but also I love the field of action. I am a nurse, not a nursery maid. Monotony is my deadly enemy. Could I stand to give up my work and simply devote myself to taking care of this baby? I pulled myself up roundly. They that put self first would better drop out of the nursing profession.

"Elsie," I said. "I think I shall spend the winter with my widowed sister in New Jersey. Will you let me have the baby to keep me company?"

Elsie laid her face against mine. I felt her tears upon my cheek.

"You dear!" she said for a second time.

"The Great Stone Face" Is Discovered at North Berkeley



THE GREAT STONE FACE AT "THOUSAND OAKS" BERKELEY

A MOST remarkable rock face has been discovered on the old Indian burial ground in the tract known as "Thousand Oaks" in North Berkeley. This rock has lain in its present position for centuries and, although thousands of picnickers have passed it, a photograph made by Robert C. Newell is responsible for the discovery of the face, only after the picture had been taken and printed.

Since the news of this find, hundreds of Berkeley people have been going out to the old Indian burial ground for a view of the phenomenon. The Northbrae car takes one within five minutes' walk of the face. From a resemblance to the face of Dante, the rock will probably be named "Dante Rock."

The Indians always selected the most beautiful spots for their burial rites and hundreds of years ago with all the countryside to choose from, they picked this beautiful oak covered knoll, with its massive rocks and babbling brooks, as the last resting place of their chieftains.

All traces of the Indians are gone except the acorn mortars cut from solid rocks and the pestles with which the primitive milling was done.

It is a curious thing that during the campaign for the purchase of this part of Berkeley (a two-thirds vote only losing by sixty-five) no one found this face in the rock. It is one of the most unique natural attractions in Alameda county and reminds one strongly of Hawthorne's famous short story of the New Hampshire Hills, called "The Great Stone Face."

MACHINE CONTROL BY WIRELESS

WIRELESS electric control of distant apparatus would seem to be a certainty of the near future. Of course, there is no possibility, as some seem to expect, of wireless power transmission. The power to be utilized, whether it is steam, gas or electricity, must either be generated at the machine or transmitted to it in one of the usual ways; the electromagnetic waves may start, stop or control the machinery, but can not run it. Several inventors are now able to exhibit devices of this sort that will work for short distances, so that the problem now is merely to increase the radius of action.

In the latest form of apparatus, invented by two engineers of Nuremberg, Germany, and exhibited recently in that city, the same sending apparatus actuated one or another of various machines in an adjoining room, according to the position at which a lever was adjusted, thus demonstrating the possibility of "tuning" the receiving apparatus so that it will be affected by waves of only one length. With the sending lever in one position, for instance, electric lamps were lighted at the receiving station; at other positions a steam engine was started, slowed up or stopped; at another still a revolver was fired, and so on.

When this or some similar device has been perfected so that it will operate at a sufficient distance, it will be able to control automobile torpedoes, explode mines and so on. It will apparently, however, be subject to the same objection as the present operative system of wireless telegraphy; that is, the possibility of another operator's "butting in." It might be awkward to have the enemy steal your torpedo en route and turn it against one of your own ships.

A GLASSLESS LAND

UNTIL very recent times the uses of glass, except in the form of enamel and small ornaments, were unknown in Japan. When the first railway cars were introduced passengers used to break the window glass with their heads, so unused were they to this feature; and finally designs were painted on the panes to show that the sashes were not empty. Instead of looking glasses most of the Japanese formerly used placid water. Only the wealthy had mirrors, and these were of polished metal. Glass is now used in quantity, of course, but although there are factories in several large cities, notably at Osaka, almost all of it is imported, and enormous reserve stocks are always kept at Tokyo and Yokohama. The use of glass for drinking purposes is still rare, porcelain and lacquered wood being preferred.