

breakfast, and, of course, Lurline was going to drive with him alone to the station. There was no question of Mary having any claim to join him now; but she felt that it was more than she could stand to take leave of him in the presence of Laura and the others. As he went up-stairs, therefore, after the meal was over, to make his final arrangements before starting half an hour later, Mary suddenly came swiftly and noiselessly towards him from the other end of the passage. Putting her hand in his, she said, with her low voice, tremulous in spite of her efforts, "Dear Bertrand, I shall not see you again; let me say now how unceasingly I shall pray that you may have every blessing and happiness this life can give you!" and before he could answer, before he could even speak a word, she was gone. He tried to follow her, but her light steps carried her quickly away, and she had disappeared completely before he could reach her. When he went down to the pony carriage she was nowhere to be seen, and he drove away without looking on her face again. Little, indeed, did he dream of the strange scene in which it should be given him to see Mary Trevelyan once more.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Most of us remember the 15th of July, 1870—that day fraught with such tremendous consequences—when over the restless waters, where many of us have passed on business or pleasure, that terrible war-cry sounded which was in truth the death-knell of such myriads of our fellow-creature. Aliens to us in race and nationality as both the contending powers were in the Franco-Prussian struggle, yet probably there were few homes even in England where some sympathetic note of terror or grief was not struck by that ominous heading to the foreign telegrams, "Declaration of War." To many an English heart it brought a dire prophecy of evil for friends and relatives in sunny France or kindly Germany; and assuredly, if it sounded the knell of unnumbered lives, far more did it ring the dirge of all the joy of life for thousands upon thousands, who have even yet to mourn the sacrifice of precious lives, and the destruction of happy homes.

The news was known nearly all over the country early on that day, but Mary Trevelyan was one of the few who did not hear it till late in the afternoon. We find her in a very different scene from that in which we left her. She is in a long, lofty room, with large windows letting in the air and sunshine, a row of little white beds down either side, each one of which is tenanted by some poor child, suffering all of them more or less in body, but patient and cheerful in the atmosphere of kindness that surrounds them. Mary Trevelyan is moving about from one another with her noiseless step and sweet smile. She wears a simple grey dress of some soft material, whose folds make no rustling sound, with a little white muslin apron, but no cap or veil hides her smooth dark hair, folded plainly round her pretty head, for she has joined no society or religious order whatever, but has merely taken charge of the little hospital for three months, while the Lady Superintendent recruits her health at the sea side. The period of her stay was already at a close, and in another week she resigns her charge to the established authority.

Mary had offered herself for this temporary work immediately after Bertrand Lisle's departure from Chiverley, and her services had been gladly accepted, with a request that she would enter on her duties at once. She had only been too thankful to do so. She had gone through the ordeal

of the few days that Bertrand had remained at the rectory after his engagement, from delicate consideration for him, and maidenly pride as regarded herself, which prompted her to conceal from all the utter waste and ruin he had brought upon her happiness, by looking on with apparent composure at his devotion to his future wife; but when he was gone and the necessity for this cruel self-restraint was over, the companionship of Laura, in whose sincerity it was impossible for her any longer to believe, became simply terrible to her. Every word the false-hearted Lorelei said, only served as a fatal proof to Mary how certain it was that she would never make Bertrand happy, for her whole conversation turned on the gaiety and amusements outside her home, in which she intended to spend her married life. Mary could not sympathize with such unhallowed visions, and took refuge in silence, which irritated Laura, to the discomfort of the whole household; and when the proposal came for her immediate departure, to enter on her new work, she saw readily enough that it was welcomed with satisfaction by every inmate of the rectory. Charlie Davenant had not returned, and nothing more had been heard of John Pemberton, and poor Mary, with all her quiet strength, could not help feeling dreary enough on the day when she left the house where none regretted her, and where she had endured the loss of all that made life dear to her. She went for that first night to the house where Mrs. Parry lived, and when, at the close of her long solitary journey, she found herself in the arms of her faithful old friend, and heard her exclamations of dismay at seeing how ill and wan her dear child looked, then all poor Mary's long continued self-control gave way, and clinging to the familiar hands that had tended her infancy, she cried aloud, in utter abandonment of grief, "Oh, nurse, my heart is breaking—my heart is breaking—how am I to bear it!" Then Mrs. Parry broke out into vehement indignation against the Wyndhams. What had they done to her darling, her sweet lamb? She had hated leaving her there, and she could see they had well-nigh driven the life out of her, and so on, with many strong words, till Mary wearily implored her to stop.

"Do not blame any one, dear nurse, and do not ask me any questions; only let me rest my head on your lap a little while, as I used to do when I was a tiny child," and slipping down from the good woman's hold, as the nurse sat in her easy-chair, she laid her head on her knees, and there let herself weep silently, but unrestrainedly, till she was quite exhausted. Mrs. Parry asked no further questions, but soothed Mary with gentle caresses and tender words, till the paroxysm of grief had subsided. Then she persuaded her to go to bed, and gave her a good-night kiss as she used to do in her childhood's days, and finally watched by her till she saw her fall into a slumber of complete exhaustion. It was Mary's last exhibition of weakness; when the next day dawned, she had recovered her composure and her strength, and no word as to her own trials ever again passed her lips. Mrs. Parry continued to cherish a secret and most bitter rancour against the Wyndhams generally, which she was wont sometimes to confide to the ancient cockatoo, when the sight of Mary's sweet patient face made it impossible for her to keep silence; but the quiet dignity of her child, as she called her, effectually closed her lips in any other way.

After one day spent with her old nurse, Mary had come to her post at the hospital, and she had found in her duties, fatiguing and often irksome as they were, a degree

of solace and consolation which she could hardly have believed it possible anything on earth could have given her. The suffering children, whose pain she soothed, whose spirits she cheered, and whose little grateful hearts she completely won, soon learned to cling with touching tenderness to their dear Miss Mary—they had found her surname so hard to pronounce that she had willingly taught them to call her by the simple name—and, young as she was, no mother could have entered more entirely into all the wants and troubles of these forlorn little ones, than she did before she had been many days in charge of the home some good Samaritan had provided for them. She has not had the heart to tell them how soon she is to leave them, and she is thinking how hard it will be to part from them as she walks down the ward, speaking a few bright words to each, until she reaches the bed of a poor little girl of four or five years old, whose broken limb she proceeds to arrange in preparation for the examination of the doctor, whose afternoon visit she is expecting. The little one is frightened at the idea of the damaged foot being touched, and tears begin to gather in the round blue eyes, which Mary notices without making any remark; but she immediately begins to tell her a charming story of the gambols of a kitten, who is the plaything of the ward, and who has been performing wonderful feats with a bandage roll, and gradually the innocent lips relax into a succession of smiles, and the two little arms are thrown around her neck, while the child exclaims, "Tottie loves Miss Mary!"

"Dear Tottie," says Mary, "I am sure I love you," and while these tender words are passing between them, the door of the ward swings on its well-oiled hinges, and the hospital doctor comes in—an elderly man, with a shrewd kind face, and a decided and rather sharp manner, which softens to a beautiful gentleness when he addresses the suffering children. For no fee or reward does he minister to their necessities, save the answer of a good conscience, and Mary and he feel equal respect for each other, and are excellent friends. She follows him from bed to bed, giving a clear concise account of what has occurred medically in each case since his last visit, and then, note-book in hand, she takes down all his directions for the hours which must elapse till he comes again. Tottie's foot is made more comfortable than it was before, at the cost of a little temporary pain, which she bears bravely, with Mary's hand clasped tight in hers, and Mary's soft voice whispering soothing words in her ear; and when all the cases had been examined, Miss Trevelyan moves down the ward with the doctor, hearing his closing directions. He has reached the door, and shaken hands with her, when, just as he is going to descend the stairs, he looks back over his shoulder and says, "Perhaps you have not heard the great news: war is declared between France and Prussia." He nods to her, and is gone before she has time to ask a question, but she has heard and understood the full import of the one brief sentence. She turns back, and walks slowly down the ward to the other end, where a large window looks out on one of the London parks, and as she passes through the rows of white beds some strange change must have taken place in her aspect, which makes itself felt even to the uncomprehending consciousness of the children, for the little hands that are stretched out as usual to catch hold of her dress and bring her nearer to them, are drawn back instinctively, and while their eyes follow her with wondering glances, they let her go unmolested on her way. She stands before the window, and