

"But, ah, Dr. Herbert," said the almost forlorn patient, "you know I've nothing now to encourage me back to life, save this poor, dear child," placing her white, bony hand on the head of the little darling, who was leaning affectionately over her pillow, with her eyes full of tears, catching the desponding words of her much-beloved mother. "She is all that is left me," she added, "of my once happy family." The good woman evidently wished to say more, but she had not the strength, and closing her eyes she looked as one really already dead. Her life vigor was indeed evidently well-nigh spent, and when she opened her eyes again, the big tears that swelled up in them told of the depth of the struggle within. The night of her darkness was now only lit up by a single star, and the raven wings of despair, which for so many weeks had been so threateningly flapping over her, made the whole world seem to her as if life itself was but an idle mockery.

It is, indeed, sorrowful enough to be sick, and hovering near death's door, even in the midst of kindred and friends, but when these evils come upon us intermingled with life's saddest bereavements, in a land of strangers, where we have been thrown by the mysterious and relentless hand of a seeming relentless adversity, without a friend and without a dollar, and with only the promiscuous and personal attentions of hospital kindness, sensitive minds often sink under such vicissitudes of adverse fortunes, as the cast of a stone to its native bottom. They feel as if they were deserted by Providence, and as if no mortal relations held them any longer in earthly guardianship,

This was the sad condition of Mrs. Fitzgibbon. She had never known before what it was to want a friend. The sun of her life had always been bright and promising, and the horizon around her had ever been gilded with its golden tinsels. But within the last two short months she had lost her father, husband, and only son, and the painful excitement had well nigh broken her life-spirit, and had thrown her into a fever, which had assumed the very worst type, and to still add to the darkness of her captivity, a gloomy hospital was the only receptacle of her sufferings and sorrow.

Until within the last few days, even the doctor himself had not learned Mrs. Fitzgibbon's history, for she had only been his patient, and where he had so many he but seldom ever learned anything of their antecedents or peculiar relations, unless it was forced upon him. It was his business to administer medicine, and he did not often stop to ask the life-story of those he attended.

In the hospital, more especially, he left this to the Sisters of Charity, who were the angel ministers of the institution. They had, in this case, more than done their duty to Mrs. Fitzgibbon, and though it was the first time in her life that she had ever received any services at the hands of these Church recluses, she was full of admiration and gratitude for their constant devotion and watch-care over her and her little daughter through all her long illness.

During much of the time, it is true, she had been unconscious of all her surroundings, and she only lived in a sort of wild dream-life of buffetings and mishaps. Her mind wanderings had indeed been terrible; and weary and bed-worn, she had for weeks hovered along the banks of the mysterious river, like some lost one who was only seeking entrance to the other shore. But the past few days had lifted her soul out from the dark mists, and placed her feet on the nearer shore again. She began to realize at last that this was not her time to go on this long journey, and she submitted to the mysterious decision with grace and thankfulness, chiefly for her dear little Nettie's sake.

Beautiful and sprightly, this only remaining jewel of a once blissful family now clung to her mother with a tenderness which knew no bounds. Her touching simplicity of spirit and action had been sympathizingly noticed by every one, and she had been tenderly cared for as an only child plucked from the fire.

The entirely destitute condition in which Mrs. Fitzgibbon had been carried to the hospital, together with the fact of her being in a raging fever at the time, precluded the possibility of knowing anything of her circumstances, save what was gleaned from little Nettie. She, of course, like all children, was ready to tell what she knew, and she had told the Nuns that "Pa and Ma, with Grandpa and Robbie, and herself, made their family, and that they were all burnt up in that terrible boat, save Ma and me."

Many will call to mind that fearful collision of the *America* and *United States* on the Ohio river. It was the most shocking and dreadful sight ever witnessed on any of our western waters.

It was a little after midnight when the two boats came together. The passengers, of which there were many, were all asleep in their state-rooms at that time, dreaming nothing of their terrible impending fate. The descending boat being heavily laden with coal oil, in an instant was enwrapt in flames, and the two mammoth steamboats thus locked together, were at once one grand sheet of devouring fire. Even the river itself took fire, for the crash of the terrible collision had dashed the coal oil barrels to pieces, and the liquid ran out over the water in burning streams, making a most