

Jack in the Hospital.

A TRUE STORY.

(Grace Maynard Buck, in 'Christian Intelligencer'.)

It was Sunday night. The lights burned low in the men's ward. The room was very quiet. Only one nurse noiselessly stepped from cot to cot, here smoothing a hot pillow, there adjusting a tight bandage, and everywhere smiling encouragement and hope into roughened and weary faces. She paused beside Jack's cot. The nurses always did, for this big gentle boy had won the good will and affection of everyone in the hospital by his cheery manner and ready smile, just as he had in his busy life at the factory before the accident.

'Please turn the light up a little,' said Jack, and as the nurse left, he reached over to the little table beside his bed, and took up a Bible, a present which his Sunday-school teacher had sent him that day. Yes, Jack was a 'Sunday-school boy,' perhaps not an ideal one, certainly not the pious kind we read about in old-fashioned stories. If it must be told, Jack was one of the most troublesome boys in his class. Such constant 'talking out loud,' such lounging positions, such a wealth of distracting objects as he was always producing from his pockets!

But often his teacher had met a deep, serious look in his honest eyes when she was speaking most earnestly, and, after all, is it not partly the teacher's fault, if a lively growing boy, full of fun to his finger tips, finds it hard to keep quiet in Sunday-school?

To be sure Jack had a Bible at home, at least there were several in the house, he thought, but none small enough for him to carry in his pocket. So, although his teacher had often urged him to bring one to Sunday-school, he had never quite reached the point of daring to walk through the streets with a Bible under his arm. If you had asked Jack if he ever read the Bible, he would have told you that he never had time. But now there was plenty of time.

After his knee had been caught in that whirling machinery, and Jack had been carried to this new, strange place, the hours had dragged heavily enough at first, but after a few weeks the pain had ceased, and then there was much to interest one. Some of the men had exciting stories to tell of travel and adventure in other countries, and the nurses were 'all right,' and it was great fun to 'jolly' them. They had brought him some well-worn novels that had been left in the hospital and Jack had been surprised to find them interesting. He had always had a natural aversion to literature before. And now here was this little leather, gilt-edged book, with its soft, pliable covers. Within was a note, and a list of chapters and verses which Jack began to search for.

'What you reading, Jacky?' The Italian who had had two fingers amputated that day was eyeing him, but not with amusement, Jack saw, so answered gravely, 'the Bible.'

He expected that some out of the dozen who heard would joke at his expense. Little did he realize how much these rough men had been softened by the experiences

through which they were passing. The quiet administration of the nurses, and the presence of this bright innocent boy among them, were not the least of these softening influences.

All were silent for a moment, then, 'Say, read to us, will you, Jacky?' some one said, and Jack read: 'Oh, God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee. My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is. To see thy power and thy glory, as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live. I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips. When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate upon thee in the night watches. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. . . .'

Jack was reading to men of many countries and many faiths. A Roman Catholic priest, several Jews, an infidel, were all in his audience that night, and the next night, when, at the same hour, some one said, 'Jack, it's time for your Bible class,' many eyes were turned expectantly toward him.

Every evening after this, in his boyish, stumbling style, he read to them words of loving assurance and comfort, and the men learned to look forward to this hour as the brightest, and yet the most quieting of those hours of pain and waiting.

One night Jack fell asleep before the usual time for reading, and did not awaken till far into the night. It was an evening of real disappointment. The men would not sleep until they were sure there was no chance of Jack's reading that night, and when, at midnight, he awoke he begged the nurses never again to let him sleep through the hour for his 'Bible Class.'

One visitors' day, there was quite a little reception in the ward. The room was very quiet, as always, but groups of their friends gathered around many of the patients, and bright flowers bloomed beside their cots. Here and there a lonely man would ask to have his screen moved, that he might watch the others meet and greet their dear ones. Jack's teacher called on that day. She had heard about the 'Bible class,' and her heart was full as she looked down the row of cots and thought of that evening hour when Jack read to the men. He asked her for another list of verses and chapters, and said, 'Please send them as soon as possible.'

The next time she called, Jack was up and helping the nurses. That was the time he told her about the little boy whom he had helped to take care of and how the little boy had died, clinging to his big, strong hand. 'Say, I read the Bible to him, too,' said Jack, in a voice not quite as steady as usual.

Jack wrote several letters to his teacher while he was in the hospital, and in the last one, he said, 'I am sorry you were not able to come and see me this week, but next Sunday I expect to go and see you and the boys in Sunday-school.' And the next Sunday he limped stiffly to his old place beside his teacher, a little thinner and paler, very much taller and quieter. The same Jack? Not quite.

Experience is a great teacher, and in the school of experience he had learned lessons of patience, sympathy and self-control. He had also entered into the sorrows of others and although his love of fun was as strong as ever, life was more serious, more earnest, and death was more real to him. No, he was not quite the same Jack.

Three Conundrums.

(Elizabeth Preston Allan, in 'Morning Star'.)

'Mother, look out of the window and see if Rodman is coming.'

'Not yet, Blake,' answered the mother; 'but he said ten o'clock, and it is not ten, by twelve minutes. You must have something very important to say to him to-day.'

'We have a fine game on hand,' answered Blake, grinning in pleased anticipation.

'Not a rough game, I hope,' said Mrs. Martin, anxiously, looking across at her boy on the couch. Blake had been laid up for weeks with a badly sprained ankle, and it took a world of patience watching to keep him as still as the doctor meant him to be.

'No, not rough,' answered Blake, looking ruefully at his bandaged ankle, and thinking how good it would feel to play rough games once more; 'but it's jolly, mother, for all that. We each are to hunt up, or make up, a new conundrum for every day, and the one who guesses the most by the end of the week wins the game.'

'What is your conundrum to-day?' asked Mrs. Martin.

'It's one I found on a scrap of old newspaper: "What is that thing which you can't get until it is taken from you?" Can you guess it, mother?'

'I don't believe I can,' she answered, after considering a while; 'but I can ask one very much like it. But here comes Rodman; so my conundrum will keep. Take care, son; don't pitch yourself about so much.'

'Hello, Rod!' cried the boy on the couch; 'what's yours? Mine's great, but you have first go.'

'This is mine,' said Rodman: "'What is it that you must give before you can keep?'"

'Well, upon my word!' cried Blake.

'How strange!' exclaimed his mother.

'What's the matter? Do you know the answer?' Rodman asked. He looked disappointed.

'No, not that; but yours sounds so much like mine that it makes my head swim. Here's my conundrum: "What is it that you can't get until it is taken from you?" Doesn't that sound like the twin of yours?'

Rodman whistled. 'It's first cousin to mine, anyhow,' he said.

The two boys exchanged slips of paper on which their conundrums were written, and set their wits to work. Such frowning, such screwing up of lips, such wrinkling of foreheads you never saw. But all in vain. They each had guessed much harder ones, but somehow the very similarity of the two confused the boys' minds.

'When you are ready to give up,' said Blake's mother, 'please give me a try;' and she went down to the kitchen to make a pudding for dinner.

Soon Rodman followed to beg her to