



ON LOOKING back over our lives, we often see that what seemed at the time the worst hours and the most helpless in their wretchedness, were, in reality, the best of all. They developed powers within us that had heretofore slept; developed energies of which we had never dreamed.

James Freeman Clarke.

## A Little Child Shall Lead Them

(Continued from last week)

"Don't look so mad," said the boy. "I ain't mad," said Schaeffer earnestly. "I was just 'tinking. Say, I got to go now." He consulted his watch hastily. "Don't your fadder, or step-mudder come to see you? No? Vell, I come. I come back to-morrow." He started and turned back. "Say, my name is Chon, too," he said foolishly. "I 'tink mebbe we get along togedder, eh? Goot-bye, Chonny!"

And the nurse rising quickly from a screen beside the next bed, watched the lumbering figure go out. "And a little child shall lead them!" she said softly.

John Schaeffer was in Ward Four the next morning, and many mornings after that, as well as many afternoons and evenings. And the fame of the strange friendship became known throughout the hospital, and 'a some byways of the outside world.

Day by day the old German became more gentle and considerate towards others. He was as one walking in new fields and learning new lessons. It was very marvellous and yet very simple. He had rediscovered a human world.

And while John Schaeffer's education in the humanities progressed, the art of orthopedic appliances surged ahead by leaps and bounds. New and intricate braces were invented to rest this and that muscle, and straighten distorted backs and limbs. They were devised and tenderly fashioned for one Johnny Connors, who hoped to be a sailor; but many little cripples will know and revel in their restful and curative magic.

And so, while John Schaeffer spent fewer hours in his laboratory, its importance to humanity was greatly multiplied. When his services were needed in the machine shop, it was a simple matter to find him. He was at Johnny Connors' bedside, helping in a game of solitaire, or fashioning wonderful ships, replete with sailing gear. Or, perhaps, he sat with rapt attention, his bulking shoulders bent forward, his large hands locked ecstatically, while a baby voice sang:

"Take me back to New York town, New York town, New York town."

Late one afternoon, after a wearisome day in the machine shop, he hurried up-stairs toward Ward Four, and sat down contentedly beside "his boy's" bed.

"Vell," said he, raising his eyes happily to the ceiling, "Let's have dot 'New York Town.'" He waited dreamily; but there was no response. He turned sharply to the bed.

"Was ist los? Vat's der madder, eh?"

"I've been crying," said Johnny simply. The long eye-lashes were wet, and the baby face was white and drawn.

John Schaeffer looked about him maliciously. "Has somebody been monkeying with that brace already?" The nurse heard him and hurried to the bedside. "Oh," said she, uneasily; "I just went for you, Johnny's been suffering all day and we didn't know it. He never cries out aloud. Dr. Frank examined him—" Here she dropped her voice to a whisper—"and says he must have an operation."

"No," hissed Schaeffer. "Sh-h," cautioned the nurse; "I'll send for the doctor."

Schaeffer was already examining the braces. He knew their correct position to the minute fraction of an inch. They were all in place, he noted. He tested the joints; they moved freely, and then he slipped up into the grave face of the surgeon.

"Take off the brace," said Dr. Frank, calmly, "and I'll show you."

A large red spot showed all about the apex of the crooked spine. "Ah, success," said the doctor, pointing his finger.

"So?" gasped Schaeffer. "Bad?"

"Very bad," said the doctor. "You see," he added calmly, "there's such a thing as a too awful brace. With a poor one we should have known of this earlier. Now, I fear it's too late!"

The old German made no reply.

With trembling fingers he pulled from his pocket a tiny pair of nippers and began gently to bend the steel strands all about the sore spot, lifting them back and relieving all pressure. The little patient sank back restfully in his pillow and smiled gratefully.

"Would you like for me to sing you 'New York Town,' now?" he asked faintly.

"No, you ain't going to sing to-day. You go to sleep now. To-morrow you can sing. Say," whispered Schaeffer, earnestly, "did you hear vot he said?"

Johnny shook his head, and Schaeffer looked relieved.

"Vellm," he said brightly, "den we keep it a secret. We goin' 'gain to haf some fun to-morrow. We fix that back—make it nice and straight, mebbe, just like a sailor. It won't bodder any more." Johnny was regarding him solemnly and Schaeffer's eyes dropped to the floor. "Dot's right," he said obstinately. "You leave it all to Chon. I got to go now. Good-bye, Chonny."

John Schaeffer plunged out of the rear basement door of the hospital and turned his quick steps towards

the avenue. In a few minutes he was fumbling for the bell at the door of a brownstone residence. A white card in the window gave the name of the famous surgeon who had smiled behind his hand at the man simply.

"The doctor never sees patients at this hour," said the maid doubtfully; "he is dressing for dinner."

"Tell him John Schaeffer wants to see him," said the man simply. "Mebbe he'll come down."

They met in the hall, the great surgeon, bland and gracious in his dinner clothes, the inventor of braces slouching against the wall, and twisting his old soft hat nervously in his big hands.

"Hallo, John!" said the surgeon easily. They had always been John and Robert to each other since they had worked together in the old hospital years ago.

"Robert," began the other earnestly. "I haf nefer asked a favor of you. Now I got one—a big one." He blinked intently over his spectacles and his voice trembled.

"I haf a little friend in de hospital. He is bad, very bad. I want you to fix him quick. I trust nobody else. He is a little boy—and—and—Ach Gott! I lof him!" He clenched his hands convulsively, and leaned back against the wall.

The surgeon looked at him curiously. And this was John Schaeffer, the cranky old German!

John Schaeffer misinterpreted his silence. "I haf plenty of money," he pulled several bank-books from his pocket. "Take vot you wish. It iss all for him anyway."

The surgeon took the books gently from the shaking fingers and put them back in the pocket. Then he rested his hands heavily upon his friend's shoulders. "John," said he, sternly, "that's the meanest thing you ever said to me, and you've said some mighty mean ones. You didn't intend it, but that hurts." He looked briefly at his engagement book. "I'll be at the hospital to-morrow at three o'clock. Get everything ready."

When the little patient was wheeled into the operating room next day, John Schaeffer was at his side, all sprightly attention. "How do you like dis funny boy, Chonny? All so vite, eh? Now we put you der here so you can look right out dot window. So! How's dot? Now we are going to haf some fun. You dream you are a sailor, mebbe on a big ship. Den, zip! You come back to New York town! How's dot?"

The nurse came up and whispered in his ear. "His parents are waiting outside. Shall I let them in?"

"No!" he said sharply. "I vill go and see dem."

He found them in the anteroom, a girl, plainly dressed and with a bold, defiant face, a young man, pale and stoop-shouldered, who might be an over-worked accountant. They squirmed under his keen scrutiny.

"So you are his fadder and mudder?"

"I am not his mother," said the girl coldly.

"No," said Schaeffer, quickly. "Tank Gott for dot! He has not got your face."

"Dere iss no law," he went on calmly, "to keep bums like you from haling children and making dem cripples. But when you neglect, like you haf dis one, dere iss anodder law, vich says you cannot haf der child. He iss MINE now. I vill fight for fifty thous- and dollars worth to prove it. He iss mine—if he lives! If he dies he iss somebody else's. You don't get him no more, anyway. You catch dot? No, you can't go into dot room," he added jealously. "You can wait outside here please. Good-day."

When he reentered the operating room, the surgeon was talking to Johnny, and looked up cheerily.

"A stout brain here, John," said he. "Look at these eyes. That's the only chance."

"So you're going to be a sailor," he went on, turning to the boy. "Well, by the time I'm ready to settle down for a rest, you'll be captain of a ship. Will you take me for a long voyage somewhere?"

The boy smiled brightly and nodded his head.

"I'll remember that promise one of these days," said the surgeon. He motioned the nurse for the anesthetic, and John Schaeffer moved hastily to the door.

"Ven you want me," said he, "I am o'er dare." He pointed to a room across the area. "Wafe someding."

And the nurse when she gave the signal, a half hour later, dropped her arm suddenly and peered intently out of the window. "Upon my soul," she said in an awesome whisper, "there's John Schaeffer on his knees praying!"

The room was very quiet when he stumbled back; and he came in on tip-toe, glancing first at the surgeon, and then at his boy. The little face was very white and still.

The surgeon laid the little arm back on the table and pressed his head to the patient's breast, listening for the throb he had lost in the wrist, and John Schaeffer looked on with dumb horror in his eyes. He could hear the rapid, steady thump of his own heart.

If he could give all his strength to another who needed just a little of it, "Ach, Gott!" he whispered, and his

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