

The Trials of a Fresh Air Patient

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The arrival of another caller mercifully gave the conversation a less intimate turn, and it was with feelings that were not wholly amicable that I presently nodded farewell to the family friend. The very manner of her going made me suddenly aware that she was and had been most careful to avoid all contact with me, even to the extent of shirking the formal shaking of my hand, and I realized keenly that in her mind my personality had been wholly submerged by the disease with which I was struggling.

But my new guest, a worthy and erratic little lady, was not one to allow an introspective thought. "I have come to beg of you," she said with all earnestness, "to seriously consider the claims of Christian Science. I am not a scientist myself," she added, "but I know of many cures effected by its agency in nervous cases like your own."

"But my ailment is pulmonary. It is not at all of a nervous nature," I began somewhat dazedly.

She smiled pityingly at me. "There is nothing amiss with your body, my child," she said, articulating each word distinctly, as if addressing a backward primary class. "You are the very picture of health, but to my mind there is grave fear of your becoming a hypochondriac." She saw to it that I missed no syllable of the hateful epithet.

Then suddenly and most annoyingly, she bent over to kiss me, and as she rose to go murmured dulcetly in my ear, "A word spoken in season, how good it is."

But one cannot remain angry with even the most blundering of the well-intentioned, and though decidedly ruffled in mind, I was completely restored to good humor by the rat-tat of the postman. With an eye educated by past experience, I rejected the patent medicine circulars in which my mail always mysteriously abounds, and opened the creamy, crested envelope of a bright society friend who apparently saw no reason why I should not join her in a hurried tour through Europe.

"Just fancy," she wrote, "sight-seeing in dear old London, shopping in gay young Paris, climbing mountains in Switzerland, and drifting luxuriously in a Venetian gondola. I am sure that a few weeks of travel would make another woman of you," she urged in conclusion.

I sighed as I laid aside the alluring lines. Little did the writer realize that the quietest of lives and exercise strictly limited to a mile a day, was at present my lot in life.

A bulky envelope addressed in a familiar hand promised well, but proved to contain a mass of clippings all relating to a series of experiments which were being made with cases similar to my own. The curative properties of the juices of certain vegetables were their theme. The week previous a similar

packet had dealt with the miraculous results hoped for from a treatment by which the chest was impregnated with creosote. Before that again it had been a somewhat vague account of a new lymph, still in the experimental stage. When I espied a line of handwriting at the foot of a long cutting, I hoped for some kindly message or for a morsel of pleasant gossip, but I shuddered to find that my well-meaning friend had just subscribed to a clipping bureau in my name, and that henceforward there were to be sent me, direct from the office, the accounts of experiments of this nature conducted in all parts of the world. At once I registered a vow to burn the packets unopened.

Yet there was worse yet still to come, for when with difficulty I made out the crabbed chirography of my clergyman, I learned that he was grieved indeed that I had not already volunteered to resume my old work in the Sunday school, and that he was greatly distressed over the fact that I was disregarding the services of the sanctuary, "especially," he added, "since I hear that you are well enough to be attending concerts."

"Why, why," I groaned, "had not the same busybody who informed him of my movements also vouchsafed the information that the concerts which I had attended were open-air affairs, at which I could sit in comfort and from which I could withdraw at any moment," and therewith, too hurt and miserable to be philosophic over this last unkind touch, I began to weep bitterly.

It was thus that the doctor found me as he suddenly appeared on the balcony in search of his missing gloves.

"Tut, tut," he exclaimed in pardonable astonishment, "I shall have to pack you off to the sanitarium again if you let yourself go to pieces like this."

"But I have had enough to make me go to pieces," I wailed, and then amid tears and laughter, I recounted the history of the morning without the least attempt to gloss over his own contribution to my discomfiture. "And you see," I concluded, "you all meant well and you are all such excellent people that under ordinary circumstances your words would be entitled to every consideration. As it is, you must admit that you have been hindrance instead of helps on what is necessarily, at the best, but a hard uphill road."

"The fault is ours indeed," said the good man gravely, "but, as you say, it is not an unpardonable one. Since the appearance of the fresh-air patient is sometimes deceptive even to the experienced professional eye, think what it must be to the untrained eye of the public. The regular life and abundant, nourishing food usually insure a promising plumpness, sunshine adds a healthful-looking tan and even brings out the freckles