

Nurse, Our Carter and Agnes (Margaret Monk, in the 'Sunday Friend.')

Even during childhood we sometimes have our little share in the grave scenes which fall to the lot of those older ones among whom we live.

The following recollections are very sober ones, connected with the time when one of my brothers and myself became aware that Nurse was most carefully cogitating whether she should accept the position of third wife to our Carter.

We felt a great respect for our Carter, because, as Nurse said, he had such beautiful manners, and there was a further tie between us on account of sundry apples and Spanish chestnuts which he had given us.

Although we called him 'our' carter, he really was not in the least bit ours, for he was carter to a farmer whose homestead joined our garden.

Father was a doctor, and Aunt Gertrude lived with us, for mother was dead.

There were three of us, John, who went to school, Lionel and myself; my name was Ruth.

Lionel was eight, and I was six.

We were both with Nurse a good deal and so we were naturally very much interested when we found that our Carter had 'proposed' to her.

Lionel heard of it first and told me. I never quite knew what was the source of his information, but I did not wonder, for it seemed to me natural that he should know everything. Although our Carter had been twice a widower, he was not a very old man, I do not think he was more than fifty.

When Lionel told me the news, I did not say very much, but I thought it over, and later in the day I remember asking him: 'Do you think that Nurse had better marry our Carter?'

We were busy making paper of silver-wood at the time in a paper-mill of Lionel's invention. He stopped in his work at my question, and his reply showed that he had been thinking far more deeply than I had.

'I doubt,' he said, 'whether our Carter knows how fond Nurse is of "ordering about"; you see, Ruth, here Nurse does pretty well as she likes, and we have to do what she says, but our Carter won't; I expect.'

I felt the great weight of this reasoning, for, as I have said, in the unbiassed days of my childhood, I recognized clearly the fact of masculine superiority in Lionel.

I returned to our paper-making and to thought.

Presently I spoke again.

'I wonder what Agnes thinks of it.'

'So do I, let us go and ask her,' said my brother.

Agnes was our Carter's sister. She had given up her place as a servant to come and live with him, when his last wife died.

In the years that have passed since these incidents happened, the characters of Nurse and our Carter have often repeated themselves in my life, but Agnes's was a rarer spirit, and that simple, bright friend of our childhood still holds a special place in my mind as a treasured remembrance of most real unselfishness.

The idea having been started that we should interview Agnes, the next thing was to carry it out, and Nurse being, as everyone will understand, in a pre-occupied condition of mind, Lionel and I boldly walked off without her being at all the wiser.

Our Carter's cottage stood a very little way down the road from our gate, and we were very soon knocking at the door of it.

Agnes opened it, and was surprised at seeing us alone, for I was but rarely allowed to go out without Nurse.

She asked us to walk in and we gravely did so and sat down.

Now that we had come we did not know how to open the subject, at least, Lionel did not, for, of course, he was to be spokesman.

There was a dead silence; Agnes waited, thinking we must have brought a message.

At last Lionel made up his mind to begin, by saying,

'Agnes, do you wish our Carter to marry?'

She looked quite amused at the idea and replied,

'Of course not, Master Lionel, I never think of such a thing.'

'But if he should marry?' Lionel said, looking at Agnes rather anxiously.

'Oh! he will not; he told me when I gave up my place, which was like a home to me, that of course he could not ask it, but that he meant to give me a home instead, for he hoped to be spared many years.'

I don't think I really understood it all, but something made me feel inclined to cry, and when I looked at Lionel and saw him looking very uncomfortable too, I could control my feelings no longer.

'They shan't do it! They shan't do it!' I cried, as I ran to Agnes and put my arms round her neck.

Poor Agnes! She was quite bewildered, but she lifted me on to her knee and tried to comfort me, saying, with the sweet, bright smile that always attracted us, 'Never mind, Miss Ruth, it will be all right, I am sure.'

Lionel had too much dignity to get out of the difficulty by tears, so he got out of it like a man.

He slipped off his chair, and came and stood by Agnes, and he said,

'You see, we cannot help knowing that our Carter wants to marry Nurse, and we came to ask you whether you would like it.'

I felt Agnes hold me tighter as he spoke. I know now that it is no uncommon thing that the niche which one person has happily filled and which they looked on as theirs, should suddenly be appropriated by another who has as much right to it. Yet, in spite of the justice of the exchange, the process of loosening from the wall to make room for the new occupant is an effort, and sharp tools have to be used in effecting it. Since I have understood more about it, I have always hoped the breaking of the news to Agnes by our childish voices, and in our childish way, may have put the first loosening chisel in a little more gently than would otherwise have happened.

A few days later, when, I presume, matters had been suitably arranged between our Carter and Nurse, as we were returning from a walk, Nurse said that she would

go in and see Agnes. She prudently left us to play by a brook at a little distance from the cottage.

We had a deeply interesting time with the minnows and caddis-worms, but, for all that, we saw Nurse come out, and noticed that, in taking leave, she kissed Agnes.

Nurse then called to us to come, and Agnes went indoors again.

As we passed the cottage, Lionel pushed open the door, meaning to go and speak to Agnes, and I was following him, when he quickly and softly shut it again, and pulled me back.

'What is it?' I said, 'I want to go in.'

'Then you can't!' he politely replied, and after a pause he added, still gruffly, 'She was—she was kneeling down.'

After this I have no further remembrance of what happened until the wedding, except that I one day heard someone remark, I will not say who, 'That if she were Agnes, she would not be sent from pillar to post and take it so quietly.'

The wedding was a grand occasion.

Nurse wore a dress which we liked especially, because it was the same color as our favorite Alderney cow. Our Carter simply looked magnificent.

Lionel and I asked if we might sit with Agnes at the service, and afterwards she came back with us to the wedding breakfast, which was at our home.

In the afternoon we went with Agnes to the station, for she was going to a new place as Nurse.

She seemed quite happy, but, as she kissed me, just before the train started, I felt something on her cheek and I knew that it was a tear.

All Things.

(Hope Daring, in 'American Messenger.')

'Something is puzzling the child,' and Grandma Granger peered through the screen in the window of her sitting-room. 'I'll not worry, though. It's good for the young to ponder the words of the Bible.'

The scene upon which her eyes rested was a quiet one. Two sides of the corner room were bordered by a wide veranda. The sunlight was shut out by climbing vines and an awning. In the hammock, Alice Curtis, a girl of seventeen, was lying, a Bible in her hand.

Alice was spending a fortnight with her grandmother. That morning she had carried her Bible out to the hammock to prepare her lesson for the coming Sunday evening devotional meeting.

Grandma went back to her rocking-chair and lace-making. In a few minutes Alice entered the room, the puzzled look still upon her face.

'I come to you with so many things, Grandma, that I thought I would study this one out for myself, but it's no use trying. Don't you think the Bible hard to understand?' Alice asked, sitting down on an ottoman close to her grandmother's side.

'No, dearie, not now. I have learned to wait for God's Spirit to make it plain. What is it that is troubling you?'

'Something in the third chapter of the Second Corinthians.'

'Oh, that is a blessed chapter! It is about