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SALLY ROSS, PROBATIONER

[By a Trained Nurse]

NOTE.—The writer of this interesting story in two chapters assures us that the hospital incidents are related exactly as they took place in the institution where she was in training for a nurse.—Ed. Mon.

CHAPTER II.

At two o'clock Miss Ross was back on duty, and feeling a little low-spirited on this her first Sunday in the hospital.

The various churches of the city had established the beautiful custom of sending bands of singers from their choirs to sing to the ward patients on Sunday afternoons. This afternoon a mixed quartette was rendering beautiful music and in turn was brought to ward G. by Miss Addams.

At the ward entrance, they began the exquisite anthem "Come unto me."

This was too much for the probationer. She felt the tears start, and in order to escape observation, she slipped into the ward pantry, where for a moment, she indulged her feeling of homesickness.

The door opened behind her and starting up in confusion she met Miss Addams.

"My dear Miss Ross, what is the matter?" "Nothing is the matter, Miss Addams,—just the music made me homesick."

"I am afraid you will have to learn better control of your emotions, if you are to become a nurse," said Miss Addams, as she turned away to join the singers.

Just then Miss Maxwell came to the door. "Miss Ross, I hear Mr. Fraser's bell. Will you please see what he wants?"

So she dried her eyes, as best she could and tapped on the half open door.

"I hoped it would be you," she began, but seeing her red eyes, she stopped in alarm. "Why in the world are you crying?"

"It was such beautiful music and being but a probationer, I have not yet learned to control my emotions," Miss Ross replied with a smile. "Miss Ross," he began again, did you ever by chance, meet or know a big chap called William Wordsworth Ross, otherwise "Billy"?"

"Do you know when your eyes are not red, you look rather like him, I wonder could he be a relative of yours?"

"Yes, he is a relative."

"So glad to know it. Now to be more exact, could you be his sister Sally?"

"I could, and I am."

"Then in the name of Billy, shake hands."

While the probationer's hand rested in that of the patient, a quick step sounded in the hall, and Miss Addams passed, just in time to witness this rite of friendship. Being possessed of a really kind heart, she had thought of the homesick girl, and returned to speak a comforting word to her.

Instead, when they met, in the corridor she said in severe tones, "Miss Ross, I must request that you maintain a more distant manner toward the patients. I am surprised at your lack of dignity." And without giving any chance for explanation, the superintendent left the ward.

Then indeed any one who had known Bill Ross in his harder moods would have seen a strong resemblance, in his sister as with head held high, she went about her ward duties.

But later, in the course of her evening rounds, Miss Addams paid her usual visit to Mr. Fraser's room and on coming out, went straight to Miss Ross. "It must have been very nice for you to have seen some one who had known your brother, especially, when you were feeling homesick," and she smiled so kindly that the poor probationer's emotions again threatened to escape control.

That night when Miss Ross went off duty, a full hour late, she stopped for a minute in the parlor where several of the nurses had gathered. But she had not yet become acquainted, and they seemed distant, and reserved, so she went to her own room and rather hurriedly prepared to retire. Seeing her reflection in the mirror, she said, "Sally Ross, if you had known, you would never have tried it, but now, you must see it through. Though, three years is a long time, if 'All the tomorrows shall be as today.'"

Half-way down the long row of typhoid cases, stood the bed of poor Connors, whose condition had become critical. It was known among the attendants that this was partly due to past indulgence in vice, though he was but a boy of twenty. He would have been moved to one of the private rooms, had they not all been occupied. Through the morning he had lain in a semi-stupor, when suddenly recovering full consciousness, he grasped the bed covers and drew himself to a sitting posture. Then with a countenance distorted with mortal fear, he shrieked, "I give it up, I give it up," and fell back dead.

The nurses and orderly, hastily surrounded his bed with screens and the doctor was hurriedly called.

Miss Maxwell, used as she was to sad scenes, was overcome for the moment, but the young doctor apparently unmoved, reminded her that he had brought it on himself. "I know it," she said brokenly, "but Heaven keep us from a death like that."

In order to remove the body without exposure to the view of the ward, they made a passage way with a double row of screens, between which they pushed the stretcher.

Apart from a show of morbid curiosity, it was surprising how little effect this event apparently produced on the other patients.

The mattress was exchanged for one fresh from the sterilizer, new covers were brought and before an hour a new patient filled the place so lately occupied by poor Connors.

But Miss Ross who had been at her usual occupation of ward dusting, was an appalled spectator of the scene. At first she stood as if paralyzed, then recovering herself somewhat, she gathered her dusting materials and quite unnoticed made her way into the linen closet, the door of which she shut and locked with anxious haste.

A large basket of fresh linen stood near ready to be put on the shelves. Upon this sank the girl, her limbs trembling as if with ague. Then burying her face in the folds of a friendly sheet, she endeavored to shut from her mind the memory of the distressing occurrence.

When the sound of retreating footsteps died away in the corridor, she cautiously opened the door, and seeing no one she returned to her work in the ward.

Next morning, Miss Ross, sought the superintendent in her office.

"I have come to ask you to let me give up trying to be a nurse," said she.

"But why, may I ask, when you have been here so short a time?"

"I have really thought from the first that I had made a mistake, and yesterday, when I saw Connors die, I knew, I should like to be a worker like Miss Maxwell, but, I have not the courage, and I have decided to give it up."

"But I would not let one unhappy death discourage me—I assure you that an event like that of yesterday is exceedingly rare. Think how many lives are saved, how many restored to their friends through the hospital."

"Perhaps I could have you transferred to Ward C, on the surgical side where the patients are not so sick, till you get more used to the work."

But, unhappily for Miss Addams' proposal, an interruption just then occurred in the form of the senior house surgeon, who appeared at the door.

"I am sorry to say Miss Addams, that we have another police case in C. They have just brought in the murderer of old Mr. Sizer. He attempted suicide, in order to escape arrest, and gasped his side pretty badly. He will need a special nurse for a time, but I think he will live."

"What a pity he could not die," said Miss Addams.

"Yes, it would likely be easier for the poor wretch, but, 'The law, my friends, must take its course.'"

When the surgeon had gone, Miss Addams turned again to Miss Ross who had been an interested listener.

"You are very kind, Miss Addams," said she, but I don't think I should do any better in Ward C."

"Very well then, it shall be as you wish," and Miss Addams turned to her writing.

But the girl still lingered. Finally, she asked rather timidly, "Is your home in the city Miss Addams?"

Miss Addams looked up quickly. "My child I have no home but this."

"Then some time when you get very tired of it all, won't you come over to my uncle's and let me give you a little of my home?" I really can make nice tea."

Miss Addams laughed. "Indeed I will gladly come over and try your tea,—but run along now or I shall never get my work finished."

Before leaving the building Miss Ross made a hurried visit to Mr. Fraser's room.

"Why Billy's sister?" he cried, I was wondering if the dust of ages was not to be disturbed. The microbes have been holding a war dance. Why such delinquency?"

"I have come to tell you that Billy's sister is a 'quitter,'" she said soberly.

"I can't believe that of a Ross, till I hear the circumstances." Then as she did not speak, "Perhaps you have found the position untenable, and like a wise soldier, have made an honorable retreat."

"I believe you guess, that I have decided not to be a nurse."

"I was hoping that was what you meant."

"Then you don't think me a coward," she said a little anxiously.

"No, I think when one finds himself mistaken, it sometimes takes much courage to acknowledge it."

"I never could have become a nurse like Miss Maxwell anyway. Is she not a splendid woman?"

"Yes she is, but there are many kinds of splendid women, and though I dare say you could have made a good nurse, I am afraid you would have done so at too great a loss."

"Do you mean my music?" she asked, as she rose to go.

"Yes, that and other things," he replied.

As she was leaving he said, "Do you know that your blessed uncle was over here last night, and has asked me to stay at his house when I leave here."

"That is like him," she replied. "When do you think you will be allowed to go?"

"Oh, very soon, now. So this is really an au revoir."

That evening when Mr. Ross arrived home he found Sally busily arranging her music. "Hello, Songbird," he called, Are you having your half-day?"

"No, Uncle," she replied, "You were right after all. I have left the hospital and am home to stay."

"Hurray," he cried delightedly. "That is good news for your aunt and me. We have missed you dreadfully Sally."

was confined to her room, with one of her rare headaches, and Sally and her patient were in the library, where a cheerful fire was burning in the open grate.

Sally was at the desk writing letters while her companion was seated before the fire with a book which he was not reading. He seemed possessed of a spirit of unrest, for he kept moving from chair to chair, from fire to window, from window to fire.

Finally, Sally laughingly said, "But you are as restless as one of the timber-wolves of which Billy writes, though thanks to Aunt Edie, you do not now look quite so hungry as he represents them to be."

"The trouble is, Sally, that I want to tell you something, only I am afraid you will not understand."

"Do you find me so void of understanding usually, that you hesitate now?" she asked gaily.

"No, but I think a girl like you is a hard judge of human frailty."

"Why Bert, I think I could forgive anything but dishonor."

"If you live long enough Sally, I fear you may have to forgive even that, or at least overlook it, though happily that is not included in what I have to tell you."

You heard them tell at the hospital, how very ill I was for the first few weeks."

It seemed to me then that your Miss Maxwell was all that stood between me and utter nothingness. When she would come into the room with her quiet self-contained strength the miserable delirium would yield to her commanding influence."

And when the fever left me and I was so pitifully weak, her will seemed to work with mine to strengthen my hold on life. Then as my strength began to return, all my past life seemed unreal, and the most trivial happenings in the sick room, assumed a tremendous importance. I counted so much on the visits of Miss Maxwell, that she came to mean the world to me."

So one night when the nurses were going off duty, I detained her till the others were gone, and asked her to marry me."

She neither blushed nor seemed surprised, but moved her chair nearer me, and in a voice almost maternal, with wise sympathy she said, "Mr. Fraser, don't you know that this hospital experience of yours, is only a passing phase of your life—and that things have lost their normal perspective for you? If you had met me outside, when you were well, you would have given me scarce a thought."

Just now, I am necessary to you but when you get well and return to your work, I will pass into your memory as a part of your experience here. Outside, we should probably not have found enough interests in common to have spoken the same language."

You have no idea of the wonderful promises our patients make of the surety of their coming frequently to see us, after they leave us, and of the many ways, in which they will show their gratitude."

Need I say, that in most cases, they forget us, in the many interests of their ordinary life, and that this is not only natural but desirable."

Then, seeing me about to protest, she added with heightened color, "I don't mind telling you that a certain young sawbones, now in Vienna, expects to return in the Spring, when I plan to resign my position here for that of a housewife."

Then not heeding my stammered words of apology and anxiety, embarrassed and impersonal, she arranged my pillows for the night, shaded the light—and left me to the night nurse."

Fraser paused for a moment, then, still without venturing a look toward Sally he went on, "Long before I left the hospital, I knew that Miss Maxwell was right, and that in my physical weakness, I had made the mistake, which she so well understood."

And then something has happened which makes me doubly certain."

"Can you guess what that is Sally?" and he looked into her eyes for the first time.

Sally met his gaze bravely, and slowly replied, "Yes, I think I could guess, but, if you don't mind, I should like to keep guessing a little longer."

"Very well," he assented cheerfully. "We will make a serial of my story, but please don't demand too long an interval before the next instalment."

Then said Sally, "But do you not think that if we should ask Miss Maxwell with us to see Peter Pan tonight, it might show her, that we are among those who do not forget?"

"An capital idea, Sally. We will telephone her at once, and ask the 'bitter woman' to come too."

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