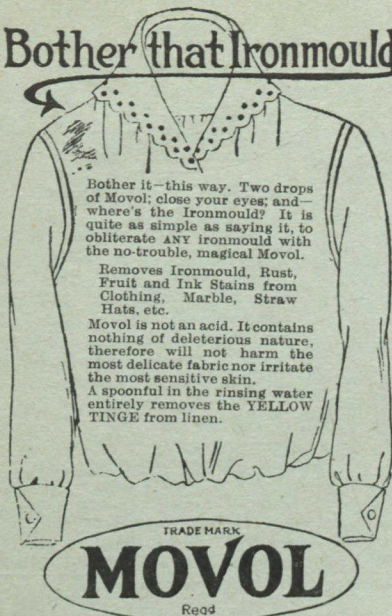


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was not so near me as I had dreamed. Mayhap, 'twas even nearer, "nearer than breathing, closer than hands or feet" but the ideas of childhood are, necessarily, very concrete; and when I once accepted the fact that the gates of pearl and streets of gold were not in the attic of Clifton Church, I felt as though they might as well be beyond the farthest star.

Many of those early memories are connected with visits to Grandfather Montgomery's farm at Park Corner. He and his family lived in the "old house" then, a most quaint and delightful old place as I remember it, full of cupboards and nooks, and little, unexpected flights of stairs. It was there, when I was about five years old, that I had the only serious illness of my life—an attack of typhoid fever.

THE night before I took I was out in the kitchen with the servants, feeling as well as usual, "wide-awake and full of ginger," as the old cook used to declare. I was sitting before the stove, and cook was "riddling" the fire with a long, straight bar of iron used for that purpose. She laid it down on the hearth and I promptly caught it up, intending to do some "riddling" myself, an occupation I much liked, loving to see the glowing red embers fall down on the black ashes.

Alas, I picked the poker up by the wrong end! As a result, my hand was terribly burned. It was my first initiation into physical pain, at least, the first one of which I have any recollection.

I suffered horribly and cried bitterly; yet I took considerable satisfaction out of the commotion I had caused. For the time being I was splendidly, satisfyingly important. Grandfather scolded the poor, distracted cook. Father entreated that something be done for me, frenzied folk ran about suggesting and applying a score of different remedies. Finally I cried myself to sleep, holding my hand and arm to the elbow in a pail of ice-cold water, the only thing that gave me any relief.

I awoke next morning with a violent headache that grew worse as the day advanced. In a few days the doctor pronounced my illness to be typhoid fever. I do not know how long I was ill, but several times I was very low and nobody thought I could possibly recover.

Grandmother Macneill was sent for at the beginning of my illness. I was so delighted to see her that the excitement increased my fever to an alarming pitch, and after she had gone out, Father, thinking to calm me, told me that she had gone home. He meant well, but it was an unfortunate statement. I believed it implicitly—too implicitly. When Grandmother came in again I could not be convinced that it was she. No! She had gone home. Consequently, this woman must be Mrs. Murphy, a woman who worked at Grandfather's frequently, and who was tall and thin, like Grandmother.

I did not like Mrs. Murphy and I flatly refused to have her near me at all. Nothing could convince me that it was Grandmother. This was put down to delirium, but I do not think it was. I was quite conscious at the time. It was rather the fixed impression made on my mind in its weak state by what Father had told me. Grandmother had gone home, I reasoned, hence, she could not be there. Therefore, the woman who looked like her must be some one else.

It was not until I was able to sit up that I got over this delusion. One evening it simply dawned on me that it really was Grandmother. I was so happy, and could not bear to be out of her arms. I kept stroking her face constantly and saying in amazement and delight, "Why, you're not Mrs. Murphy, after all; you are Grandma."

Typhoid fever patients were not dieted so strictly during convalescence in those days as they are now. I remember one day, long before I was able to sit up, and only a short time after the fever had left me, that my dinner consisted of fried sausages—rich, pungent, savoury, home-made sausages, such as are never found in these degenerate days. It was the first day that I had felt hungry, and I ate ravenously. Of course, by all the rules of the game, those sausages should have killed me, and so cut short that "career" of which I am writing. But they did not. These things are fated. I am sure that nothing short of predestination saved me from the consequences of those sausages.

Two incidents of the following summer stand out in my memory, probably because they were so keenly and so understandably bitter. One day I heard Grandmother reading from a newspaper an item to the effect that the end of the world was to come the following Sunday. At that time I had a most absolute and piteous belief in everything that was "printed." Whatever was in a newspaper must be true. I have lost this touching faith, I regret to say, and life is the poorer by the absence of many thrills of delight and horror.

FROM the time I heard that awesome prediction until Sunday was over I lived in an agony of terror and dread. The grown-up folk laughed at me, and refused to take my questions seriously. Now, I was almost as much afraid of being laughed at as of the Judgment Day. But all through the Saturday before that fateful Sunday I vexed Aunt Emily to distraction by repeatedly asking her if we should go to Sunday-school the next afternoon. Her assurance that of course we should go was a considerable comfort to me. If she really expected that there would be Sunday-school she could not believe that the next day would see the end of the world.

But then—it had been printed. That night was a time of intense wretchedness for me. Sleep was entirely out of the question. Might I not hear "the last trump" at any moment? I can laugh at it now—any one would laugh. But it was real torture. (Continued on page 41)

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