

The Daily Short Story

DOCTOR AND NURSE.

By Harold Carter.

Nurse Glynn tapped quickly at the door of Doctor Bentley's room in the Central Hospital, and then entered without further ceremony. The doctor was seated at his table writing; he had not heard her knock. As she approached he turned round in his chair, got up, and took her in his arms and kissed her.

"I'm wanted?" he asked.

"Yes, dear. An emergency case. A child has been knocked down by an automobile. His leg is broken and there are internal injuries.

"Are they getting him ready?" asked the doctor, slipping into his linen overalls.

"He's being anaesthetized now," Nurse Glynn answered, and kissed him again. "Oh, my dear, how glad I shall be when Easter comes. Then we shall be together always—no more of these hasty meetings."

She went out noiselessly, and Dr. Bentley, having completed his preparations followed her into the operation room. The little patient lay upon the glass table, ready for his scalpel. At the head sat the nurse, pouring out from time to time a few drops of ether upon the mask which covered the lower part of the face. But although she watched the doctor; and she watched him with some sort of intuitive faculty of sight, so that without failing in her duty, she was as conscious of him as of the child.

For this was to be the supreme measure by which she might understand his love for her, whether strong and abiding, or a pitiful thing born of loneliness upon the one side and proximity upon the other. She was not sure of him; she could not be sure until he met the mother of the child on the way out.

He did not know that this was his own child upon which he was operating so deftly. His skilful fingers

picked up the shattered filaments of muscle and tissue, uniting them for his assistant's sutures. His scalpel cut into the bruised tissues, but mercifully and only to lay bare the shattered bones within. None at the Central Hospital bore such a reputation for deft and careful surgery as Doctor Bentley.

They had been engaged three months. She knew what was a common report, that he had been married before, unhappily; that his wife had gone west and obtained a divorce upon the technical ground of desertion; that she had returned to marry Anthony Blair, the millionaire, who could afford to give her those luxuries which her butterfly soul desired, and which the doctor immersed in his work, had never dreamed of as necessary to her, nor been able to gratify.

But that there had been a child she did not know till that evening when Mrs. Blair appeared with a white face at the hospital gates and pleaded for the crippled baby that had been knocked down. She carried it in her arms, and Nurse Glynn would never forget the look of terror upon her face. That it was the doctor's child she knew, for it must have been four years old, and it was only three years since the couple had separated.

Well, when he knew, would his heart turn with yearning toward his child and cast her out utterly, even though he knew that the past could not be undone?

The operation was almost ended. The last instrument was replaced in the tray of bubbling water; Dr. Bentley was sponging the sewn tissues with the perchloride and pulling off his gloves. He divested himself of his linen garments and stood up once more conventionally clothed. Nurse Glynn removed the mask. The little patient moaned and stirred.

"He'll do finely now," she heard the doctor say. "Take him up to the ward nurse. And—goodnight."

She wheeled the table into the ad-



"Nearly four," answered the woman, she was still trembling, still overcome by the shock of the meeting. Her little butterfly mind was badly bruised, even as the child's little body had been.

"Four!" exclaimed Dr. Bentley, in astonishment. Nurse Glynn, standing near, saw his face turn pale. He made an impulsive step toward her.

"Alice! Whose child is he? Who is his father?" he demanded fiercely.

"I don't know sobbed Mrs. Blair. "Why do you ask me? Why are you looking at me like that? Haven't you injured me enough that you should terrify me?" she sobbed. "I don't know who is its father, nor its mother either."

"Its—mother!" gasped the doctor. "Isn't he your child then?"

"Certainly not!" she exclaimed, drawing herself up indignantly. "Do you suppose my child would go to a common hospital if he were injured? Didn't they tell you that John ran the automobile over a street brat? Yes," she continued in a petulant voice, "and a crowd gathered and threatened me, and if I hadn't had enough presence of mind to jump out and carry him into the hospital they would have thrown stones at me. And I don't dare to go out if she should be going to die, or I shall be arrested and thrown into a common cell."

"Have no fear of that, Mrs. Blair," answered the doctor gravely. "I shall have you sent home in my own automobile. And the child will be well in a few weeks. As for the damage—"

"Mr. Blair is able to pay for any damages," replied the woman coldly. She had not understood.

The doctor bowed and turned away. He walked straight past Nurse Glynn; she followed him; he turned and saw her.

"You know, then?" he asked, seeing the look on her face!

"Yes, dear," she whispered. "And I have been so afraid!"

He pressed her to his heart.

"You thought it was my child? It had been—"

"If it had been," she whispered anxiously.

"Dearest," answered the doctor

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gravely, "I might have loved then. But you would still have been first in my heart—as now, as always."

"If it had been," she whispered anxiously.

"Dearest," answered the doctor

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