

Mildred Wayne's Service.

(By Emma C. Dowd.)

Mildred Wayne was very unhappy. As she lay in bed thinking over the past year, tears sprang to her eyes and trickled down her pale cheeks. Scarcely twelve months before she had entered college with high honors and unbounded hope. But her ambition had been greater than her bodily powers; she had studied too hard; she had eaten too much pastry, too many sweets; with a purseful of spending money she had indulged in candy at all hours; she had taken exercise when she should have been resting, in fact, she had lived so at variance with the laws of nature that at last her nerves had become exhausted, and she had come back home a wreck, at seventeen! For more than two months she had been a helpless invalid.

To be sure, she had every comfort that money could procure; but just now she felt that these comforts were very few indeed. She was too weak to read, and seldom strong enough to hear reading. Moreover, her food was a constant source of trouble. Mildred was unusually fond of sweets, and sweets were strictly forbidden by her physician. She longed for lemonade; but as she was allowed to have it only without sugar she refused to touch the 'sour stuff,' as she peevishly termed it.

'I never heard of a sick person before that couldn't eat jellies and custards,' she would say, bitterly, when some friend, not knowing of the doctor's orders, brought in some choice bit of cookery. 'I shall starve on beefsteak and bread and butter,' she would complain; 'I don't believe good things would hurt me a bit!' Nevertheless she was a sensible girl, and deep in her heart she honestly believed that the doctor knew best. But her fretfulness and despondency were a constant source of grief to her family.

'If you could only take things a little more cheerfully,' her mother had just said to her, 'you are sure to be well again, the doctor says; it is not as if you had some incurable disease.'

But Mildred could not be persuaded to take any other than a doleful view of everything.

'I don't know whether I shall ever be well again or not,' she said to herself, after her mother had left the room. 'Dr. Motte says that health will come back in time, but when? that is the question! He says it may come in six weeks or I may be ill for a year, he cannot tell. Oh, dear! And perhaps I may die after all! Perhaps he doesn't know! If I could have company it would be different; but I can't have even that comfort. No, all that is allowed me is to lie here and think, think, think! If I could only sleep, but my nerves won't let me do that—oh, dear!'

Poor Mildred! But even then there was something bright in store for her, though she did not know it till a few minutes later, when Dr. Childs, the minister, was announced.

Dr. Childs was one of the very few who were admitted to the sick room. Ever since her childhood he had been pastor of the church in which Mildred belonged, and she loved him very dearly. She looked forward to his visits with delight, and although to-day she was in a despairing mood her face lighted perceptibly as he entered the room.

She soon relapsed, however, into her former discontent. Dr. Childs listened patiently to her complaints, but took so cheery a view of her condition as to cause her to tell him that she thought he was unsympathetic.

'You don't know what it is to lie here, day after day,' she said, 'not able to read or write or sew or do anything! And I can't have any company excepting you and one or two others. Doctor says he likes to have you see his patients, and that I may always see you when you come unless I am very tired, that is one comfort! But it is so hard to do nothing. Sometimes I get so desperate that I think I will read anyway, and then if I do it tires me and brings on the trouble with my heart, till I wish I had been content to stagnate. Oh, I meant to do so much in the church this vacation; but all my planning has come to naught. I am of no use whatever.'

Dr. Childs strove to divert the sick girl's mind from herself, and in a measure he succeeded. At last he rose, saying:

'Dr. Motte will not want me to visit his patients if I stay so long as to tire them out.'

'Oh, don't say good-by yet!' and a doleful look took possession of Mildred's face.

'Then I will say, "How do you do?"' he responded, gaily.

Mildred laughed. How could she help it?

'That is the first time I have seen her laugh in two weeks,' said Mrs. Wayne.

Then the mother was called from the room, and the two were left alone.

'You say that there is nothing you can do,' said Dr. Childs.

'Not a single thing! I am just good for nothing!' was the dismal answer, and Mildred's eyes filled with tears.

The doctor's eyes grew moist, as he thought what it must be to lie there cut off from almost every pleasure.

'But I think there is something left for you to do,' he said, cheerily.

'I don't see what,' she replied. 'You read about sick people; but they can always write or do fancy work or something. And I am so weak that sometimes I can't even talk.'

'Are you ever so weak that you cannot smile?' he asked, a whimsical look coming into his eyes.

A queer, pathetic little pucker played around Mildred's mouth for an instant, and then she smiled broadly.

'You know I'm not,' she said.

'Then if that is the only thing left you, I think it is plainly your service. People do not generally have their work so clearly marked out for them.'

Mildred watched the minister's face in eager silence, and went on:

'Didn't you see how your mother's face brightened when you laughed just now?'

'I didn't notice. Poor mother! I haven't smiled much lately; I have felt so blue I couldn't.'

'Well, you can't go back to smile through the past; but you can smile now, and you can keep right on smiling until you get well. Perhaps you do not know how much power there is in smiles. Some people go so far as to think they bring pleasant thoughts, and that a person cannot be angry when he is smiling. But one who smiles is certainly happier than one who does not smile, and everybody around him is happier too. So if something is brought you for dinner that you do not exactly fancy, smile over it—you have no idea how much better it will taste! Let all the house be certain of your smile. Whenever your father or mother or sister or brothers come into the room, smile—no matter how bad you feel. It won't make you a bit worse, and it will make them feel a great deal better.'

'I'll try it!' cried Mildred. 'It will be something to do, and I thought there wasn't anything.'

'I have a little verse in mind that I think fits your case pretty well,' said the minister. 'I'll write it down for you,' and he took note-book and pencil from his pocket. When he had finished, he read the lines aloud. This was the stanza:

"They also serve who only stand and wait;"

Thus sang a mighty bard of England's Isle;

Looking on those who bear the sufferer's fate,

I think they serve who only lie and smile.'

'I shall see you again in two or three days,' said the doctor, 'for I shall be anxious to know how you get on in the smiling business. I hope there will be large profits.'

For a long time after the minister left her, Mildred lay resting, the slip of paper containing the quatrain in her hand. She was tired, but there was a smile on her lips. It was thus that her mother found her.

Mildred showed the lines that Dr. Childs had given her.

'I believe he wrote it himself,' she said; 'I almost think he wrote it for me.' She repeated the last line softly to herself, and smiled.

She had begun her service.—*American Messenger.*

A Herd Laddie.

'Are you the son of John Brown of the Self-Interpreting Bible?' asked a blacksmith's wife of Dr. Brown, of Edinburgh.

She lived in a remote hamlet among the hop-gardens of Kent, and knew nothing of the distinguished Scotch physician; but she was familiar with the 'Self-Interpreting Bible,' the great work of John Brown of Haddington, one of the most popular of the theological writers of Scotland, and the great-grandfather of the Edinburgh physician.

Dr. John Brown heard the question with surprise and pride, for he held the heroic old man of Haddington in peculiar reverence, and cherished as an heirloom the Greek Testament he had won when a 'herd laddie.'

The story of that Testament should encourage every poor boy to make Pope's lines prophetic of himself:

'Honor and shame from no condition rise;
Act well your part, there all the honor lies.'

At eleven years of age, John Brown, the future theologian, having lost both father and mother, was apprenticed to a pious shepherd, who tended his flocks among the hills of Perthshire. The 'herd laddie' was a good boy. He aspired to be learned as well.

While watching his flock he taught himself Greek and Latin. The extent of his knowledge caused the ignorant country people to say that the boy was in league with the devil, and had sold his soul for lore!

The boy had one desire, the gratification of which would amply reward his labor in studying Greek. He wished to read the New Testament in the original tongue, and to obtain a copy of the priceless volume. One night, having committed his sheep to a companion, he walked to St. Andrews, a distance of twenty-five miles. Arriving there in the morning, he went into a bookseller's store and asked for a copy of the Greek Testament.

The bookseller, surprised at such a request from a herd laddie, was disposed to make game of him; but a professor of St. Andrews University happened to be in the