

Selections.

THE FENCE, OR THE AMBULANCE?

'Twas a dangerous cliff, as they freely
 confessed,
 Though to walk near its crest was so
 pleasant;
 But over its terrible edge there had
 slipped
 A duke, and full many a peasant;
 So the people said something would have
 to be done,
 But their projects did not at all tally.
 Some said, "Put a fence round the edge
 of the cliff:"
 Some, "An ambulance down in the
 valley."

But the cry for the ambulance carried
 the day,
 For it spread through the neighboring
 city;
 A fence may be useful or not, it is true,
 But each heart became brimful of
 pity
 For those who slipped over that dan-
 gerous cliff;
 And the dwellers in highway and
 valley
 Gave pounds or gave pence—not to put
 up a fence,
 But an ambulance down in the valley.

"For the cliff is all right if you're care-
 ful," they said,
 "And if folks even slip and are drop-
 ping,
 It isn't the slipping that hurts them so
 much
 As the shock down below—when
 they're stopping!"
 So day after day, as these mishaps oc-
 curred,
 Quick forth would these rescuers
 sally,
 To pick up the victims who fell off the
 cliff
 With their ambulance down in the
 valley.

Then an old sage remarked, "It's a mar-
 vel to me
 That people give far more attention
 To repairing results than to stopping
 the cause,
 When they'd much better aim at
 prevention,
 Let us stop at its source all this mis-
 chief," cried he,
 "Come, neighbours and friends, let us
 rally!
 If the cliff we will fence, we might
 almost dispense
 With the ambulance down in the
 valley."

"Oh, he's a fanatic!" the others re-
 joined;
 "Dispense with the ambulance!
 Never!
 He'd dispense with all charities, too, if
 he could;
 But no! we'll support them forever!
 Aren't we picking folk up just as fast as
 they fall?
 And shall this man dictate to us?
 Shall he?
 Why should people of sense stop to put
 up a fence
 While their ambulance works in the
 valley?"

But a sensible few, who are practical too,
 Will not bear with such nonsense
 much longer;
 They believe that prevention is better
 than cure,
 And their party will soon be the
 stronger.
 Encourage them, then, with your purse,
 voice, and pen,
 And (while other philanthropists
 dally)
 They will scorn all pretence, and put up
 a stout fence
 On the cliff that hangs over the valley.

Better guide well the young than reclaim
 them when old,
 For the voice of true wisdom is
 calling:
 "To rescue the fallen is good, but 'tis
 best
 To prevent other people from falling."
 Better close up the source of tempt-
 ation and crime.
 Than deliver from dungeon or galley;
 Better put a strong fence round the
 top of the cliff
 Than an ambulance down in the
 valley!

—Joseph Malins.

Our Story.

NELLIE.

A Sketch from Life.

BY ROSA MULHOLLAND.

A child had been passed in the dis-
 pensary as a fit inmate for the Children's
 Hospital in Dublin, and had been
 brought up to the wards by the nuns in
 charge. Truly, the new patient was an
 odd little figure. The ward-maid, who
 had received it from the nun, looked at
 it with surprise, though pretty well
 accustomed to strange-looking children.
 Sore eyes, sore spots on the face, a
 tangle of wild hair, a swelled mouth, a
 frost-bitten nose. The little creature
 was clad in the most curious assort-
 ment of rags; a boy's pair of pantaloons,
 in holes, a girl's dragged petticoat; a
 remnant of a woman's jacket wrapped
 about the shoulders.

"Are you a boy or a girl?" asked the
 ward-maid, looking at the forlorn object
 with puzzled eyes.

"I dun' know," said the child stupidly.

"What do they call you?"

"Nellie Murphy."

"Have you a father and mother?"

"Iss."

"What is your father's employment?"

No reply. The question was not
 understood. The eyes were too sore to
 emit any particular expression, and
 peered blankly into a corner away from
 the questioner.

"What does your father be doing all
 day?" said the ward-maid, putting her
 question in a more familiar, and there-
 fore more comprehensible form.

"Murderin' my mother!" was the
 quick and startling answer.

The ward-maid said no more, but pro-
 ceeded to give her a bath, to cut off her
 tangled hair, to put her into a little
 white night dress and flannel jacket,
 and establish her in a crib in a shaded
 corner of the girl's ward, where the
 light from the windows should not hurt
 her eyes. As soon as her head touched
 the pillow the child fell asleep, and
 slept almost without interruption for
 three long nights and two dark winter
 days. Early in the morning after the
 third night, she was found sitting bolt
 upright in her bed, gazing around her,
 and eagerly demanding to know what
 day of the week it was.

"It's Saturday, my dear, and you have
 been here since Wednesday evening,"
 said the Sister, patting her little hand
 kindly. "And really," she added to the
 ward-maid, "her eyes are better, and
 her face is not so swelled, and she has
 got a spark of intelligence in her coun-
 tenance."

The child had dropped back on her
 pillow again, however, and rolled herself
 away from the light, taking no notice of
 anything, while all the little life and
 bustle of day in a children's hospital
 began and continued around her. A
 baby clambered out of its bed and
 turned a somersault on the floor, right
 behind the back of the Sister, who was
 serving out the bread and milk, and a
 chorus of delighted laughter from twenty
 cribs greeted the performance. Another
 infant screamed for its neighbor's crow-
 ing toy cock. Two or three little con-
 valescents, with shaven heads and
 smiling pallid faces, hugging broken-
 nosed dolls in their lank young arms,
 came to Nellie's bedside trying to make
 overtures of friendship to the stranger.
 But Nellie would have none of them.
 She was pining for the hovel out of
 which she had been taken, home-sick
 for the home where her seven years of
 existence had been passed amid quar-
 reling, drunkenness and dirt. All that
 day she would neither speak nor eat;
 but late in the evening a sound of
 sobbing and wailing was heard from the
 crib in the corner.

"What is the matter, my poor child?"
 said the good nun, bending over the
 little figure convulsed with sobs under
 the coverlet.

"It's Saturday night, and my mother'll
 be bate, an' I won't be there to save
 her!" wailed Nellie, and refused to be
 comforted.

Days and weeks passed away, for
 Nellie's case was a tedious one. Her
 blood had been poisoned by foul air, and
 fevered by "sups of whiskey" given her
 to dull the pangs of hunger, her system
 exhausted by years (her few years!) of
 half-starvation. It took all the father's

wages to keep him in whiskey and
 porter, so how could Nellie get a bit to
 eat except when the neighbors gave it
 to her? The child had always been
 hungry in order that the father might
 always be drunk. Nellie had no ob-
 jection to that—she did not think any-
 thing about it; but the one thing she
 could not bear was to see her mother
 beaten. In order to quell the storm of
 fear and anguish which the child suf-
 fered in her crib, the nuns went to visit
 her mother in her den of a home, and
 found her gaunt, tipsy, idle, gossiping in
 her doorways with others like herself.
 Sister Mary asked leave to come in and
 talk to her. She had brought her news
 of her child, and she had also brought
 her a little present of tempting food.
 The wretched mother was overcome and
 covered her face with her dirty apron.

"It's a poor place for the likes o' you,
 ma'am, an' shamed I am to ask you to
 sit down. I had a better place wanst.
 I was a decent servant and thought
 much o' myself before I saw Pat Mur-
 phy's face, or smelt the whiskey."

"Ay, Mrs. Murphy, it's the whiskey
 does it," said the nun gently. "Now if
 you would only promise me that you, at
 least, will never taste it again."

The woman shook her head. "When
 he throws the stools at me," she said,
 "I've to run out and get it—only for the
 whiskey I'd go mad."

"Better to go mad without the whis-
 key than with it," said the Sister sorrow-
 fully. "But cheer up now, Mrs. Murphy,
 and come and see Nellie on Sunday.
 You cannot think how improved she is."

The mother came on the Sunday. She
 washed her face and borrowed her
 neighbor's gown and shawl; and as she
 had kept sober all Saturday, and hidden
 from her husband on Saturday night,
 she presented a much less shocking
 appearance than usual as she sat by
 Nellie's crib. The child gazed at her
 with adoration in the big black eyes,
 which were now visible under the eye-
 lids from which the sores had been
 gradually cleared away, and was as
 happy as it was possible for the unhappy
 little mortal to be. This hollow-eyed,
 skeleton-like, uncleanly mother was to
 her the most lovely, loving, loveable
 creature in God's universe. She saw no
 fault in her, thought no ill of her, and
 the child's one complaint against a cruel
 world was that on Saturday nights this
 worshipped mother should be "bet."
 Her own sores were nothing to Nellie,
 cold was nothing to her, hunger was
 nothing to her, so long as she might be
 allowed to fling her own small person
 upon her mother's body, to ward off the
 blows that were aimed at that beloved
 form.

Now, as Nellie sat up in her crib
 healed, smiling, pretty, and clean in her
 white nightdress, and with her short
 curly crop, the mother scarcely knew
 her; and the woman wept softly as her
 child's arms fastened themselves tightly
 around her neck, and the soft cheek
 nestled gladly against her own. As she
 sat there, rocking her in her arms, and
 shedding quiet tears over her darling,
 who knows what thoughts passed through
 Anne Murphy's drunk-soldened mind?
 She would try to bear her troubles
 better, and keep away from the whiskey
 palace. She would get some work to
 do, and strive to earn over again the
 good character she had once possessed
 and had miserably lost. She would live
 to be decent once more, and appear like
 yonder neat respectable young woman
 who was visiting her sick baby in the
 neighboring bed. She would struggle
 not to go mad when blows fell upon her,
 to remember Nellie; and then time was
 up, the visiting hour was over, and the
 mother left her child and went back to
 her trials and temptations.

Weeks passed away. Nellie's case
 had not been less tedious than was
 expected; but a continued course of
 wholesome food, cleanliness, freedom
 from recurring shocks of terror, even
 more than doctor's treatment, had
 transformed her into a pretty, intelligent
 and lively little girl, who, if not very
 strong, was in a sufficiently wholesome
 and healthy state. She had learned to
 forget the horror of seeing her mother
 "bet," to find her little world a pleasant
 place, and to have hope and confidence
 in the goodness of "big people." Nat-
 urally of an amiable temper and full
 of fun, she had become the life and soul
 of the girls' ward. The Sister, who in
 leisure moments amused the children

by teaching them to sing, had found
 Nellie an apt pupil; and her piercingly
 sweet voice rang above all the rest when
 hymn or ballad or merry catch was
 trilled by the young convalescents for
 the comfort of the more suffering
 patients. When she sang "Mother of
 Mercy," or the "Wearing of the Green,"
 even the boys in the next ward sat up
 in their cribs and forgot their pains in
 listening.

At last, however, the day arrived
 when Nellie had to leave the hospital.
 The doctors pronounced her cured, and
 another and more suffering mite was
 waiting to take possession of her bed.
 She said good-bye to her young com-
 panions, going round the cribs, and
 shaking hands with all. A child which
 had just come in envied Nellie for going
 "home," and very happy and bright
 Nellie looked in the nice blue woollen
 frock and holland pinafore in which the
 kind sisters had clothed her. Her dark
 curly hair lay in smooth rings on her
 forehead; her big black eyes were full of
 tears as she flung her arms round the
 neck of the nun who had been her
 tender nurse; and yet all the while her
 little face was shining with smiles at the
 prospect of being again with her beloved
 mother.

"Lord pity her poor babe!" thought
 the Sister, as she let the little hand go,
 and gave her in charge to the ward-maid,
 who was to take her home. "How will
 she be able to bear the life she is return-
 ing to?"

The ward-maid came back with a very
 serious face from her errand of leaving
 Nellie at home.

"Such a black drunken hole!" she
 said to the Sister. "I give you my word,
 ma'am, it was all I could do to keep
 from snatchin' g her up and running back
 with her away from them. I felt like
 I had been dropping a lamb into a wolf's
 den, so I did."

"Indeed, I wish we could have kept
 her," said the Sister; "but this is not
 an orphanage, and we have no place for
 her. But I will bear her in my mind,
 and we may get her in somewhere."

"I doubt if she would leave the
 mother," said the ward-maid. "To see
 her hugging the tipsy wretch, and call-
 ing her all the loving names! God
 knows, I can't eat my dinner for think-
 ing of the sight?"

And the ward-maid sat down to dine
 with a disgusted look on the good-
 natured face; and the nun went away
 about the duties of the hour, thinking
 much about Nellie Murphy, and how she
 could manage to get the child away from
 her incorrigible parents, and into a
 decent home.

A few quiet, cheerful days had elapsed
 at the Children's Hospital. Nellie was
 still missed by her young companions,
 but her bed was now filled by a stranger,
 and the little newcomer already had
 had her pains assuaged by the skill and
 care always at work in the place. Satur-
 day night came round again, and just
 as the dusk was deepening in the wards,
 a loud ring was heard at the great front
 door. The ward-maid came hurrying
 up the girl's ward, where the Sister in
 charge was sitting by the crib of a very
 young infant, softly singing it to sleep.

"If this is a case, Bridget, you know
 it cannot be taken in to night. The
 hour is past—"

"O ma'am, it's Nellie Murphy—mur-
 dered?"

The Sister turned pale. "Hush!"
 she said: "don't frighten the others;"
 and slipping her arm from under the
 shoulder of the now sleeping babe, she
 followed Bridget down stairs.

There she was—Nellie stretched on a
 board, and an old broken battered door,
 torn from some crazy "condemned"
 tenement, to serve her as a couch.
 Her face was white as marble, her curly
 hair dabbled in blood, her eyes closed to
 open no more on a troublesome world.
 The warm frock was gone, pawned for
 whiskey, and the child's delicate form
 was wrapped in an old gutter-draggled
 rag with neither shape nor texture. A
 woeful change, a pitiful sight, only for
 the truth which here seemed conveyed
 that Nellie had got away to Heaven!
 But no, she was not in Heaven yet; she
 was still breathing, and might yet re-
 turn to life. Very quietly, and without
 any fuss, they carried her into the room
 where she had been so happy, and placed
 her on a bed but that morning vacated.
 It was a quiet hour in the ward; most
 of the children, even the convalescents