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..A.. WHISTLING GIRL

By Charlotte A. Canty

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They carried him in from the surgeon's room and laid him on the narrow little bed that the nurse had made ready. Her eyes were wide, and her face was pale to the lips, but her step was steady and her manner calm as they withdrew and left her alone with him. A suppressed sob shook her frame as she lightly touched the bandages over his eyes, those honest gray eyes in which she had read nothing but loyalty and devotion. But Annie Morton was a trained nurse, and she forced down the rising tide of emotion and sat beside her patient, quietly waiting for him to regain consciousness. When he stirred, her hand was on his breast in an instant, holding him steady.

"Only the nurse," she said in a low, even tone. "You are to remain perfectly quiet."

The meaning of her words came to him slowly as the effect of the anesthetic wore off.

"Nurse," he suddenly asked, "why are my eyes bandaged?"

"They have been injured," she explained, "but we think not seriously. The only way to be sure that we shall save your sight is to keep the eyes bandaged for a time."

Her quiet manner subdued him, and he was silent, but only for a moment. "Tell me first," he said, "have you seen my brother, Jim Curtis?"

A shudder ran through the girl. Yes, she had seen him, stretched out in eternal quiet.

"All is well with him," she answered, "but you must be quiet now."

"He didn't see me until the last minute," went on the man, "and I had thought that he was a thousand miles away."

"We were fighting our way across the clearing when I saw a big fellow strike at a man just ahead of me. The man turned to parry the blow, and I saw his face. It was Jim! I remember throwing myself between the fellow and my brother, but after that I don't remember anything."

The nurse was trying to stop him. "I know," she said. "A shell burst almost in front of your face. It was Captain Jim Curtis who led the men across that clearing. It was reckless work."

"Yes, but that's Jim, though," said the man. "Why, he'd dare anything."

How proud she'll be to hear of his courage in this affair! Say, nurse, couldn't he come in to see me?"

"No, not under any circumstances," was the decided answer. "You're talked too much now."

"I'll be quiet, nurse, but won't you ask him to give me a whistle as he passes by? He has the prettiest whistle in the world. It's like a fute. Wait till you hear it!"

A swift rush of tears blinded the nurse. She was only a woman, and it meant much to her that the playmate of her childhood's days was even then being carried away to lie forever silent in a soldier's grave.

"Ask him to whistle just once. He'll surely come to ask about me."

"I'll see about it," she answered at length, "if you think it will not excite you too much."

"Oh, nurse," the big man's voice had grown tremulous—"I haven't heard that whistle for five years! You'd know what he is to me if you knew what I've given up for him."

The nurse caught her breath. "We'll see about it tonight when I go to make my report," she said. "Best now, so that the report may be a good one."

The man obeyed. It was some time before he spoke again.

"I don't know why you should remind me of her," he said. "You're such a little, soft voiced thing, and Annie is a big western girl, with a voice that makes the room ring when she laughs or sings. She does both, bless her! She can whistle, too, as well as any fellow I ever knew. Jim taught her, and I used to tease her about being a whistling girl."

A sad little smile passed over the face of the tall nurse as she bent above him to arrange the pillows.

"I must leave you now to make my report," she said. "Be very quiet, and I will not forget your message."

The man lay still, wondering how long the darkness would last. He felt, lost, lying here alone, but suddenly through the stillness there came a clear high whistle, another and then a succession of bird calls. The man lay tingling with delight in the sounds.

"Jim!" he whispered. "God bless

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you, lad! Thank heaven that I was with you in time!"

"When the nurse came in again, she found him tranquilly smiling."

"He did whistle, nurse, the same merry old whistle. Couldn't you ask him for me how Annie is? Only that!"

"I can't ask him anything," replied the girl, with forced calmness. "I shall not see him again."

The man sighed.

"Well, I won't trouble you, nurse. I'd like to know how she is, though. There isn't another woman in all the world like our whistling girl."

The nurse did not dare to speak.

"You're a stranger to me, nurse," he went on, "and yet I can't help telling you all about it. She lived near us all her life, but it wasn't until Jim came to me with his hopes that I realized what she was to me. I never told her. I could see that she and Jim were made for each other, but I couldn't stay there and tamely wait for the end. I—"

The man was trembling from head to foot, but the nurse had sunk down beside the bed and buried her face in the covers.

"I went away," he resumed, "and I haven't heard a word from them since. I hope she's happy. I'd like to ask Jim why he's here and not with her. But she has spirit and courage. She's not the one to bid him stay idle at home in these times. Nurse, was that a tear on my hand? There—I didn't make you cry, did I?"

The nurse choked back the tears and replied in her habitual half voice: "It was the lotion that I use for your bandages. No more talking tonight, please."

"No more, nurse, but you know now why I wished to hear Jim's whistle. To hear him is to know that he is safe and that no sorrow will come to Annie."

The whistle floated up to him each morning and evening at the hour that the nurse went to report.

The old airs that were familiar about his western home came to the patient listener in the darkened room. He grew stronger as the days went by, and the nurse watched him with dreamy happiness.

She had been away from him one morning, and when she returned she met the doctor at the door. He was talking with a friend, and as she stepped past him the words rang clearly into the quiet room:

"To replace Captain Jim Curtis, who was killed in that skirmish on the 15th."

"Who—what?" The patient had started up in bed, his face white with horror. The nurse sprang to him. He fell back as she reached him. He stiffened in her arms, and the blackness of despair settled down upon the heart and the hopes of the whistling girl.

The doctor's abrupt commands roused her. She was the nurse again, not the stricken woman. Together they worked to bring the patient back out of the shadow, and presently she was alone with him again.

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MAKES YOU EAT

"Nurse," he said, with a sob in his voice, "I suppose I must have been dreaming or maybe was not quite sane, but I'll swear I heard that whistle. It was Jim's signal, I know. But Jim is dead! Oh, Annie!"

The nurse was down on her knees beside him. Her strong, soft hands held his; her voice was steady and sweet.

"Listen, dear," she said. "Annie is—Annie is here! You couldn't know me while your eyes were bound; but, dear, you were more blind before. It was never Jim; it never could be. It was you then; it is you now. Oh, my love, you have lost much, but will you not be brave for my sake, for the sake of a day that may be?"

A light of understanding settled slowly upon his changing face. His hands closed tightly upon hers.

"Annie," he whispered, "is it a dream?"

The nurse laughed in spite of the tears that would flow.

"Oh, doubting one," she said, "how could this be a dream?" And light as an elf's caress he felt her kiss upon his lips.

The Welsh Note.

How many of our readers know what the "Welsh note" was? Here is what the Rev. John Evans tells us in reference to the way in which English was taught in Wales in the middle of the last century: "This school had several features unknown in the Welsh school of today. The Welsh note was one indispensable feature. This secured English conversation. It was a smooth piece of wood, like a flat iron rule, with the letters 'W. N.' carved on it. When any one was caught speaking Welsh, the Welsh note was immediately handed to him, but the hand which held it at the end of the lesson was the one made to tingle in consequence, so it was a common occurrence for the child who had it to move about from pew to pew, craftily tempting others to speak Welsh. This sign of guilt, therefore, often changed hands, until at last it rested in that which had to bear the burden of all the transgressions of that law."

Australian Trees.

Kansai is known to be among the most valuable and generally useful of the many excellent timbers produced in the forests of Australia, and it has many giants that approach those of the Yosemite. One felled had a trunk that rose eight-four feet to the lowermost branch, was over six feet in diameter, and its cubical contents were about 13,500 feet.

Caught in the Act.

Clara—Jack tried to steal a kiss from me last night.

Maude—Did he succeed?

Clara—Well, er—not exactly. A fair exchange, you know, is no robbery.—Chicago News.

When to Use "shall" and "will."

"At what time shall you be at liberty?" is the correct form when you desire information, not consent or a promise. "At what time will you be at liberty?" is equivalent to "At what time are you willing to be at liberty?" It implies that being at liberty is dependent on the will of the person spoken to. "At what time shall you be at liberty?" is equivalent to "At what time are you going to be at liberty?"—being matter of the future, not dependent on the will of anybody. "Will you?" expects the answer "I will," it denotes willingness, consent, or determination. "Shall you?" expects the answer "I shall," it denotes futurity and nothing more.—Elizabeth A. Wilkey, in The Ladies' Home Journal.

Whither Drifting.

"It's hyund white folks put in heaps o' time," said Uncle Eben, "ahgufy-in' 'bout whether we's descended 'fom monkeys. Dat ain't de question. It's whut direction is we gwine now."

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