

"It will be a long convalescence, doctor; but he is fairly out of danger now."

"Thank God! We can afford to be patient, if only he is spared us. Is he very much pulled down?"

"Yes, poor child. First the exhaustion, then the fever—no wonder he is pale and thin and weak. But he often smiles now, and he is the pet of the hospital. Patients, doctors, nurses—we all love him."

"And when may I see him?"

"I wish I could say—as soon as you like! As it is, we must wait till he asks for you, or till he is decidedly stronger."

"I can wait. I am too thankful for his life to be impatient."

"Here, Surgical Hospital."

For the first time Nurse Lester was the one to open the communication with Dr. Webber, though it was nearly five weeks since she had first spoken with him through the telephone. Now she was nervously tapping the heel of her light shoe against the floor, and there was a look of puzzled anxiety on her face which did not clear when she heard the well-known voice speaking in quick disturbed accents.

"Here, Dr. Webber. Anything wrong?"

"No, not exactly. Eric is rather better. He had half a pint of beef tea for dinner and a cupful of cocoa just now; but— Excuse me, doctor, I am afraid I must ask a somewhat indiscreet question."

"Well?"

"I am afraid it may—"

"Don't trouble about me, if it can help the boy. What is it?"

The nurse hesitated an instant, then plunged boldly into the subject.

"Doctor, is your wife alive?"

"Yes." The reply was curt, yet in the very harshness of the tone lay an indication of intense pain.

"Is she with you?"

"No."

The pained look deepened on Nurse Lester's face; but she resolutely continued her inquiry.

"Forgive me, doctor, but it may be a question of life or death for Eric. He asks for his mother, and nothing will satisfy him but the promise that she shall come to him."

"Oh, my God! And I want him so! He is everything to me! Does he not ask for me?"

There was such a depth of suffering in Dr. Webber's voice that Nurse Lester had to struggle for composure before she could answer in the cruel negative.

"No, doctor, he has not asked for you yet; but I am sure he will soon."

There was a moment's pause; then the nurse resumed somewhat timidly—

"Could you let Mrs. Webber know she is wanted here?"

"I am not quite sure of her whereabouts; but I will do my best to find her out. Tell Eric that father will send mother to him."

"I will. Would you like me to say anything else?"

"No. Let him forget me if he will!"

The bitterness of the last sentence hurt her. It was with infinite pity in her voice that she said—

"I am so sorry! I am sure Eric could not forget a father who is so fond of him. He is so clinging in his affection, poor little laddie!"

There was no response to these last words; so Nurse Lester merely added, "Good afternoon!" Then she stopped the communication.

Two days later, Nurse Lester stood before the telephone with a sweet young creature, in whose face sadness and joy were pathetically blended. As soon as communication was established between the hospital and Dr. Webber, the nurse glided into an adjoining room, closing the door behind her.

It was, this time, not her ear that listened eagerly for the doctor's sonorous voice—not the nurse's heart that beat faster at the familiar sound—but that of the estranged wife longing for reconciliation.

"How is the boy, nurse? How did he stand the meeting?"

"Oh, Donald, our boy is longing to see you. He was so glad to see me, poor baby; but now he keeps saying, 'Father too! Won't you come, Donald?'"

"I can't, Evelyn—not while you are there."

"Donald, be merciful! You know you condemned me unheard. I wronged you, I know; but I have repented bitterly. Forgive me for the sake of our boy! The doctor says we must on no account cross his wishes in his present weak state. You always were so fond of little Eric!"

"I can't, Evelyn! Besides, he does not really want me. Don't ask me to come!" And the communication was discontinued.

With bowed head, young Mrs. Webber left the room and returned to her child.

Nurse Lester clenched her fists in the twilight of the passage, and cast from her a tumult of rising passion, before she lit the gas and went about her evening duties.

Next morning it was the nurse, not the mother, who stood at the telephone, waiting for Dr. Webber to speak.

"Here, Dr. Webber. Who is there?"

"Doctor, you must come! Eric has had a restless night, and is feverish. He clings to

his mother and asks her to call father. You must come!"

"I can't!"

Nurse Lester hardened her heart and voice. "If Eric dies, it will be your fault, doctor."

The next moment she heard a wild broken cry which frightened her. But presently the voice that had grown so familiar to her sounded through the telephone, calm and solemn.

"I will come!"

For an instant Nurse Lester forgot her habitual self-control, and involuntarily exclaimed, "God bless you!" The next moment she recovered herself and added, "May we expect you by the twelve o'clock train?"

"Yes. Good morning!"

Little Eric lay sleeping in his white hospital cot. His tiny pale face was pillowed against his mother's hand; his own left hand was clasped round one of her fingers. The bandaged arm and shoulder were held motionless by splints. He looked frail and ethereal, but very peaceful. His mother sat beside him, watching him with a look of infinite love.

Nurse Lester had drawn a screen round Eric's cot and had slipped out of the room. Now she was waiting in the entrance-hall, trying to imagine what appearance belonged to the voice of the man she had never seen but who was, nevertheless, no stranger to her. Her whole heart was filled with the wish that the estranged husband and wife might be drawn together by the bedside of their only child.

A tall dark man, with a noble face and earnest eyes, entered the hall. Nurse Lester advanced to meet him with outstretched hand, as one goes to welcome an old and valued friend.

"Dr. Webber, I believe?"

"Ah, you must be Nurse Lester! How can I ever thank you for all you have done for me and for my boy?"

He wrung her hand and looked down into the eyes she raised to his face with a deep gratitude shining in his own.

"Come to your wife and child," she said simply, in the soft, persuasive voice he knew so well. "Eric is asleep now, but you can see him at once."

She led the way, and he followed in silence. She saw him fall on his knees beside his sleeping boy and extend his hand to his wife in sign of pardon. As she closed the door behind her, she heard the solemn kiss of reconciliation. And her heart swelled with happiness and thanksgiving for the reunion of two lives that were indelibly bound together by the love of a little child.

It was not long before little Eric returned home to the arms of his mother and father.

COOKERY RECIPES.

MEAT DISHES.

HOW TO CHOOSE MEAT.

1. Beef should be a good red colour with yellowish fat.
2. Mutton should be a good red but not so red as beef; the fat should be firm and white.
3. The flesh of veal should be finely grained and the fat should be firm.
4. The flesh of pork should be finely grained, the fat white and without kernels.
5. The flesh of good meat is firm to the touch and no moisture exudes.
6. There should be no unpleasant smell.

RULES FOR ROASTING AND BAKING MEAT.

1. Have ready a clear, bright fire for roasting, and a hot oven for baking.
2. Wipe the meat with a damp cloth.
3. For baking, lay the meat on a meat-rack on a dripping-tin.
4. Put the meat in the hottest part of the oven first of all, or if roasting hang it at first quite near the fire; this is to keep in the juices. Afterwards let it cook more gently that it may not be hard.
5. Baste often.

6. A thick joint takes longer to cook than a thin one of the same weight.

7. Meat with bone cooks more quickly than meat without.

TO MAKE GRAVY.

1. Put the meat on a hot dish and keep it hot while you make the gravy.
2. Pour away the dripping into a clean basin.
3. Pour a sufficient quantity of hot water or stock into the dripping tin; add pepper and salt and a dredge of flour and boil up.