

A SISTER'S INFLUENCE.

One of St. Catharine's Hospital's Many Tragic Incidents.

Hospital life is never without its tragedies. So swiftly do they follow each other that while mind and heart are still filled, to the exclusion of all things else, with the said contemplation of one just past, another advances toward the culminating point to demand instant and absolute attention. All about is the murmur of careless and jocular chat in every ward; all around are eyes lighted up with happy anticipations of speedily returning health, but always, always the hand of death is resting upon some brow. Always one more life is passing fast away. Always is the shadow of impending doom lurking somewhere near the dancing sunbeams of returning hope.

Within the past three weeks two fine-looking young men, one about 26, the other about 30 years of age, were entered in St. Catharine's Hospital as patients. They seemed intelligent and well-mannered and were certainly well-dressed, but although still able to walk it was apparent to every one who saw them that they were both very seriously ill, and the Sisters of St. Dominic, who received them in the ward to which they had been assigned, realized at once, with their well-trained perceptions, that the young men had probably applied for admission to the hospital too late.

These young men were fast friends. They had roomed together in a private house in the Fifteenth Ward. They were out together almost every evening. The amusements and the tastes of the one were the amusements and tastes of the other. They lived the careless, easy going life of single young men away from home and relatives, and in one of their festive little jaunts about town they exposed themselves too recklessly and caught cold together. But that to them, with their apparently strong constitution, was a trivial matter and not a break did they make in their round of recreation until the Saturday night of that week, when they found themselves too ill to keep up any longer. Then they went back to their room together and tried to doctor themselves.

Late on the following Wednesday afternoon they gave up their task and walked together to St. Catharine's Hospital, which they reached in an almost exhausted condition. They were placed in cots side by side and the house physician examined them carefully. "Pneumonia, both of them," he whispered, as he walked away to give directions for their treatment.

One of the Sisters asked each of the young men if they had any relatives or friends whom he wished to have notified of his illness and whereabouts. "No, not one," said the younger, turning his head away, a little sadly, it seemed. The elder reflected a moment and said, speaking very painfully and huskily: "I have a little sister living up near Harlem. Perhaps, if she knew I was here she might like to come and see me." He gave her address, dictated the outline of a message and the note was promptly mailed to her.

It is the custom in taking the name and other particulars of the applicant for admission to the hospital to ask of what religious denomination he is. These young men had replied that they were christened in the Catholic Church, but they had abandoned that faith years ago and had never accepted any other. Now, the Sisters of St. Dominic do not utilize their position as hospital nurses to try to win converts from other churches, but the spectacle of these young men, born in the Catholic faith and speeding to eternity without an atom of religious belief appalled them. Naturally they sent for the priest who was that week in charge of St. Catharine's Chapel, and he was soon conversing with each young man in

turn. Did they wish to repent of their sins and return to the bosom of the mother church? No; they did not, they would not. They were out of the church for good, and nothing could induce them to return to it. The priest soon left them, telling the Sisters that he feared he could do nothing.

Both young men passed a restless night, but were well cared for, and in the morning seemed a little better, especially after they had been washed and robed in fresh garments to replace those which had been saturated by heavy night sweats. These are offices performed by the Sisters themselves as part of their sacred and manifold duties, and never could they be more skillfully, tenderly and delicately performed. The young men began to look about them and take an interest in their surroundings, the elder one especially, when he felt able to talk, making comments to some of the convalescent patients which proved him to have a quiet, humorous vein in his make up and which gained for him some warm sympathizers and friends. But every now and then he anxiously asked what time of day it was and had anything yet been heard of his little sister? She arrived during the morning hours and was immediately conducted to her brother's bedside. A rather pretty girl she was, not more than 18 or 19 years of age. Tears were in her eyes as she entered the ward but she dried them as she approached her brother. Evidently she had already been warned of the serious nature of her illness and did not wish to have him see her weeping. Her greeting was most affectionate and she gently chided her brother for his failure to inform her of his illness before he was compelled to seek refuge in a hospital. It was clear that she was very fond of him. Pretty soon, at his request she went to the next cot and talked sympathizingly and hopefully to his friend. Then she returned to her brother. All day she sat at or near his bedside, caressing him and helping him in every way, while the Hospital Sisters, seeing her desire to do something for her brother, brought her ice and simple cooling draughts for the parched throat, telling her how and when to administer them. Then they left her alone with him as much as they deemed prudent, but never left the patient out of sight for any length of time and always appeared to perform important services for him with their own hands. Still it pleased the little girl greatly to think that she was nursing her sick brother and he, too, seemed better for it.

But the house physician as he examined the two patients shook his head and Dr. Oarroll, the visiting physician, who made an especially early call, looked still more grave. Late in the afternoon the little girl kissed her brother, gave him a farewell smile and walked away. As she passed out of the room she burst into tears.

That evening the young men were again examined by physicians. At 1 o'clock Friday morning the younger patient became somewhat delirious. Everything possible was done to quiet him, but at 2 o'clock he was worse, and half an hour later he was a raving maniac. More than once he sprang out of bed, struck and kicked and hit at male convalescents who led him back and threw missiles at them until everything movable had to be taken beyond his reach. A single Dominican Sister, however, was able by mere persuasion to partially quiet him. At first he swore horribly at her, but she talked him out of that, too, and only from her hands would he take quieting medicine. As soon as her back was turned he was raving and struggling again, only to quiet down when she reappeared. So it went on until daylight, when he became too weak to struggle with any degree of violence. He was quiet enough after that until 6 o'clock prayers were in progress, when he startled everybody by a wild

yell and an attempt to spring from bed again. It required no effort then, however, to restrain him. After prayers, while one Sister was preparing the morning medicines for the ward, another watched closely the dying man. He was very white then and his now wasted face was twitching. Suddenly he gave a great gasp, half raised his head and fell back in the Sister's arms. The other Sister quickly approached the bedside. A second after she reached it the young man was dead.

One Sister stood between the heads of the two cots to conceal the deathbed scene, which had come more suddenly than was expected from the dead man's friend. In a twinkling screens were brought out by the Sisters and placed about the cot of the dead. It was hoped that the surviving friend knew nothing of the death, and other patients were warned not to talk about it. He did not know, though, for more than an hour later, long after the Sisters had carried the body away, the survivor opened his eyes, beckoned to one of the newly made acquaintances and hoarsely whispered: "That was awful. I know all night that he was dying, but it broke me all up to see him going like that." No further reference did any fellow-patient hear him make at any time to his dead friend.

That morning the priest visited the surviving patient again, and asked him how he felt. There was a pleasant talk between the two, and soon the subject of religion was once more broached. It was no use. Not even the death of his friend had induced the young man to repent.

Early in the morning the "little sister" was in the hospital again. She had already shown herself a devout Catholic, and it was whispered about the ward that her brother's obduracy was breaking her heart. All day long she sat at his bedside. When she left the two Dominican Sisters of the ward took turns in sitting up all night with the sick man. Saturday morning he seemed better again and began to think himself almost a well man, after the Sisters in attendance had washed his face and combed and brushed his hair and mustache. "I'm getting along," he said to a fellow-patient, who, for a few minutes, was left to take care of him. "I'm a little foggy still about the lungs, that's all."

Very early Saturday morning came the faithful "little sister." Her eyes were red from constant weeping and she had evidently passed a sleepless night, but more affectionately and smilingly than before did she greet her brother. He seemed very glad to see her, but after a little time, while she was whispering earnestly into his ear, he uttered a hoarse exclamation of anger, turned over on his side without assistance and persistently kept his head away from her. Everybody knew that the "little sister" had joined in the effort, as she fondly hoped, to save her brother's soul, and had been rudely repulsed. Soon the sick man sank into a troubled slumber and the girl, tiptoeing over to a convalescent patient, asked him if he could get her a prayer book. Prayer books are easy of access in St. Catharine's Hospital and one was soon obtained for her. "I haven't given up hope yet," she said, smiling through her tears as she took the book. There was that in her voice which made it certain that it was not hope of recovery she was referring to. That had already been abandoned by another kind of hope.

"I must hold this prayer book down low," she whispered as she resumed her seat beside the cot, "for if he sees me with it in my hands when he wakes he may be angry."

For hours after that, prayer book in hand, she sat by her brother's bedside weeping while he slept, and smiling into his eyes whenever they slowly opened, murmuring as she did so words

of sisterly love. Often during his slumbers, which were now heavier and more stuporlike than before, she would lean over him, and, with her lips very near to his face, move them as if breathing prayers for his salvation.

It was the doctor's last visit. He did not need to stay long. When he left he beckoned the hospital Sister to follow him. Then the hospital Sister returned, and gently leading the watching, praying girl away from the bedside, whispered to her. The girl's frame shook with sobs. "The doctor says he's dying," she sobbed to some inquiring patients as she came back. Soon, again, the brother partly roused himself from his lethargy only to see his "little sister" without a tear in her eyes, smiling once again:

But action was demanded now, if ever, and the girl went away and evidently besought the two Sisters of St. Dominic to help her, as, indeed, they had undoubtedly done more than once before. They were willing to try again. One clergyman had already tried twice and failed. A second clergyman was sent for, and, with a screen placed around the cot, he was left alone with the dying man. He talked gently and persuasively, but soon retired sadly enough. Still the Sisters of St. Dominic were anxious to help the patient and sorrowing girl to save her brother's soul. The Mother Superior and a Sister from a lower ward were sent for. All of them went behind the screen, which, after all, did not hide the scene from a few of the patients in one corner of the room, who could not retire as the others from that end did, for the reason that they were still confined to their beds. Soon the gentle pleadings of the Dominican Sisters became so earnest and clear that they could be easily heard, and every patient in the room listened breathlessly. It was a period of fearful solemnity, that in which the great final effort was made to bring back the long lost sheep to the fold. Again and again the dying man was besought to accept Divine mercy while there was still time. Again and again he refused. He was asked to remember the teachings of his early youth, but he gasped out that they were no longer anything to him. Then the Sisters spoke to him, still gently but with growing earnestness and eloquence of his mother's hopes for him and of the faith she died in. For the first time he faltered and moisture filled his fast dimming eyes. His little sister could no longer restrain her sobs in his presence. He looked at her tenderly as she knelt by his bedside, took her hand in his and still gazed at her.

"Yes," he said at last, "let me die in faith."

At 6 o'clock that evening he lay breathing his last. Two hours before he had expressed contrition to the priest and the last rites of the church had been administered to him. His "little sister" was still kneeling and weeping and praying at his pillow as she watched earnestly the all but lifeless face she had so dearly loved; but through her weeping eyes there shone a light of joy not seen in them before. She was mourning still and mourning bitterly, but no longer did she mourn without hope. Beside her and also on the other side of the cot, Sisters of St. Dominic knelt and prayed for the fleeting soul which had been reclaimed through their gentle pleadings and the "little sister's" tears after all other agencies had failed. It was not many moments then before the end came.

The two fast friends who had roomed together, been stricken with illness together and entered the hospital together were now together in death.—
F. J. C. in Brooklyn Times.

"Be sure you get Ayer's" is an important caution to all in search of a thoroughly reliable blood purifier, Ayer's Sarsaparilla being the one on which there can be no manner of doubt. It has stood the test of nearly half a century, and has long been considered the standard.