

THE BEST OF BEST.

BY HARRIET BECHTER STOWE.

When winds are raging o'er the upper ocean, And billows wild contend with angry roar, 'Tis said, far down beneath the wild commotion, That peaceful stillness reigneth evermore. Far, far beneath, the noise of tempests dieth, And silver waves chime ever peacefully; And no rude storm, how fierce so'er it be, Disturbs the Sabbath of that deeper sea. So to the heart that knows thy love, O Purest! There is a temple, sacred evermore, And all the bubble of life's angry voices Dies in hushed stillness at its peaceful door. Far, far away, the roar of passion dieth, And loving thoughts rise calm and peacefully. And no rude storm, how fierce so'er it be, Disturbs the soul that dwells, O Lord, in thee! O rest of rest! O peace, serene, eternal! Thou ever livest, and thou changest never; And in the secret of thy presence dwelleth Fullness of joy, forever and forever!

A BIT OF RIBBON

From the Youth's Companion.

Outside, the keen, sharp winds of a cold winter day, the particles of snow and ice gleaming like diamonds in the bright rays of the sun, which possessed no power to melt them. Inside, in the light, clean ward of the Hospital, warmth and brightness and comfort; rows of neat white coats on either side, and nurses in white caps and aprons flitting to and fro, in constant attendance upon the sufferers lying there.

At the farther extremity of the long ward, where the sunshine fell softly over the white-draped cot, lay a little girl of eight years, but so small, so frail and delicate, she seemed scarcely more than half that age. An accident on the street, several weeks before, had seriously injured her, and as no one seemed to claim or care for her, she had been brought to the hospital.

The skill of the ablest physicians and the constant care of skilled nurses had, however, been able to do little more than to give temporary relief from the severe pain she constantly suffered, but her gentleness and patience had won the hearts of all about her.

To-day she lay quietly upon her cot, twisting in and out over her slender fingers a strip of bright tinsel paper, which she now and then held in the sunlight, turning it to and fro to catch the lustre upon its shining surface. Then, folding it softly, she tried to fashion a tiny bow, but the stiff, brittle paper parted in her hands, and fell in shining bits over the white coverlet. With a patient sigh, she dropped her hands and turned wearily upon her pillow.

Dr. Jay, one of the visiting physicians, was making his morning tour of the hospital, and had stopped for a moment to watch the child's patient endeavors to amuse herself. The case had been one which had interested him deeply. Poor little Maggie! Her patience and gentleness had won his sympathies.

"She seems to have a peculiar love for everything bright and pretty," the nurse said, in answer to a low-toned remark from Dr. Jay. "She will amuse herself for hours with some bit of paper or string."

"You should petition for a supply of dolls," was the doctor's humorous rejoinder. "I think in this case they would be more beneficial than medicine," and with a smile and a pleasant word to the child, and a few directions to the nurse, he passed on.

The next day in making his morning round of calls, he was delayed a few moments by a passing procession. His carriage had stopped just in front of the windows of a millinery store, and a piece of bright, brocaded ribbon caught his eye. In an instant there rose before him the pale face of his little hospital patient and her piece of tinsel paper, and the next moment he had put a five-dollar bill in the hands of his colored coachman as he took the reins from him.

"Run in there, Jim, and buy me two yards of that flowered ribbon," he said; and five minutes later the procession had passed, and he was driving down the street with the package of ribbon stowed away in his capacious pockets. He seemed perfectly indifferent to the fact that Jim had returned but two dollars of the five, and to the apparent absurdity of paying three dollars for a gift to a child, who, doubtless, could not have told the difference between this elegant fabric and a piece of ten-cent ribbon. But if any one had dared to hint that he had committed a piece of folly, he would simply have shrugged his shoulders indifferently. Dr. Jay's kindnesses were never done by halves.

"There, Maggie, you can make a bow out of that to suit you," he said, pleasantly, as, an hour later, he stood by the little one's cot, and unrolling the ribbon, let it fall in lovely shimmering waves over the white coverlet.

The child's large dark eyes opened wide in surprise and delight; there was a quick indrawing of the breath, a clasping of the thin white hands in an ecstasy of rapture too deep for words.

At last she stretched out her hands, touched lightly the shining folds, drew them softly through her fingers, and laid them against her cheek with loving tenderness, as if the ribbon had been some animate creature. It was indeed a lovely piece of goods; a soft, lustrous background of bright, delicate blue, over which was carelessly strewn half-opened moss-roses and buds, the deep pink of the flowers and soft shaded green of the leaves form-

ing a lovely contrast to the lustrous blue of the groundwork. Older eyes than Maggie's, and those more accustomed to luxuries, might have dilated in delight at sight of so beautiful a gift.

"And it is mine—for true?" she said, at last, as if such great good fortune could not possibly be hers.

"Yes, all your own, to do just as you choose with."

"Oh! oh!" was all the delighted child could say, but there was such a world of love and gratitude in the depths of the soft, dark eyes, that Dr. Jay turned away with suspiciously wet eye-lashes.

"You have made a heaven for little Maggie," the head nurse said, upon his next call. "I never saw such pleasure as the child takes with that bit of ribbon. She has certainly made a hundred different combinations of bows and dolls and all sorts of fancy fixings out of it. She is a queen, a fairy princess, and every thing else by turns. Once I offered to cut it for her, that she might make bows more conveniently. You should have seen her. She hugged it up to her, and looked at me with such frightened, pleading eyes, one would certainly have thought it was some living creature I was going to harm. There, just look at her! isn't she a picture?"

She certainly was a most lovely picture, as the doctor came up to the little bed. The dark eyes were bright with happiness, and the pale cheeks flushed a delicate pink, rivaling the roses on her beautiful gift. Pain and sorrow were all forgotten in the delight of her new possession.

She had evidently exercised all her taste and skill in arranging her beloved ribbon to the best advantage, in anticipation of the doctor's visit. It was looped and bowled and festooned in a most graceful manner about her head and form, for, all unknown to herself, Maggie had inherited all the taste and skill of the loving, gentle little French mother who, deserted by the one who should have been her protector, had died broken-hearted at the birth of her child.

"If she could but see how pretty she looks!" the nurse said, softly.

The next day when, from the capacious pockets of his overcoat, Dr. Jay brought forth a small hand-mirror, and held it before the eyes of the delighted child, her cup of happiness was overflowing.

Every night the beloved gift was carefully smoothed and folded in tissue paper. With one bunch of roses turned on the outside of the package, and with a tender pressure of it against her cheek, and a loving good-night kiss, Maggie would fall asleep, her hand resting lovingly upon its soft, lustrous folds. At her first waking moments it was unrolled, and the delight of manifold manipulations recommenced, with ever fresh delight.

But there came a day when even the possession of her heart's treasure could not overcome the terrible pain which racked her slight frame.

For days she had been growing worse, and the physicians saw no hope save in an operation—difficult and dangerous, one which if unsuccessful must result fatally.

They had postponed it from week to week, hoping for favorable results without it. But one morning Dr. Jay found Maggie lying so white and exhausted from pain and sleeplessness, he saw clearly that there was no alternative.

She seemed unconscious of his presence, even when he pressed the thin white hand as he felt her pulse. The pallid, pain-marked face, the limp, wasted little form, appealed most pathetically to his kind heart, and bending over her he pressed a kiss of fatherly tenderness on the white forehead. Her large dark eyes suddenly unclosed, the warm blood flushed the pale cheeks, and a smile of tender, loving delight flashed over her face.

"Is the pain so hard to bear, dear child?" he asked, sympathetically.

"It is better now," was her low reply.

Ah, how little Dr. Jay suspected, as the dark eyes followed him with such worshipful tenderness, that his kiss was the first caress the poor child had ever known! Kisses and cuffs and drunken oaths had often been showered upon her, but a father's kiss, a mother's tender caress, poor Maggie—worse than orphaned—had never known.

"There must be an operation without delay," was Dr. Jay's decision, after a brief consultation with the house physicians. "To-morrow at eleven at the very latest. She cannot live over forty-eight hours in her present condition."

Then to the head nurse whom he had summoned, "You will please tell her, Mrs. Hatch, sufficient to have her understand the necessity of the operation. She seems unusually intelligent, and it will save her from fright and nervousness, and she needs everything possible in her favor. Do not tell her until an hour before the operation; let her sleep to-night if she can under the opiate, without knowing it."

So at ten o'clock next morning the nurse, in the most tender manner possible, explained to the child, so far as she thought necessary, the operation she was about to undergo, concluding with—

"We hope to make you strong and well again."

"Will they hurt me very much?" Maggie asked, her lip quivering not withstanding her brave efforts at self-control.

"Not very much, and you will know nothing about it; they will give you something to put you to sleep until it is all over."

"Who will do it?"

"Oh, it's all right then!" with a glad smile of loving confidence, "he will save me for sure, if anybody can, and I know he won't hurt me."

When the hour arrived, without a murmur of dread or shrinking on her part, the little frail, emaciated form was laid upon the operating table, her hand tightly clasping the beloved ribbon even in that dread hour.

She glanced from one to another of the grave faces of nurses and physi-

cians who stood around, looking in vain for Dr. Jay, who, delayed by patients, had but just arrived. She called his name softly, and hastening to her side, he bent over her with a kindly, reassuring smile. The thin, wasted little hands were eagerly outstretched to him, and the face lighted up with a smile of loving tenderness as she said, softly—

"I'm not afraid if you do it—you'll save me if you can, I know—but if I should die"—she hesitated, stopped, looking up appealingly into the kind face above her.

"What is it, dear?" he asked reassuringly.

"Would you mind—would you care—if I—?" her voice sank lower and lower, as she hesitated, her eyes still wearing that appealing look—"would you—let me kiss you—just once—before I go to sleep? I might not wake up, you know, and you've been so good to me." Still lower almost a whisper, "no one ever kissed me before you did!"

Did Dr. Jay think of his own petted darling at home—his only child—to whom life had been one long caress? and did he feel the contrast between her and this poor homeless little wail, to whom caresses were unknown luxuries?

Perhaps so. There certainly were tears in the kind eyes as he tenderly raised the frail little form in his arms and pressed her to his breast.

The slender, childish arms were clasped about his neck, and her lips met his with a tender, clinging kiss. For a moment her cheek nestled fondly against his, then touching her lips lightly to his forehead, she sank softly back upon her pillow.

"Will you hold my hand please, while I go to sleep?" she asked, pleadingly.

Dr. Jay clasped the frail little hand in his broad warm palm, and with her beloved ribbon held in the other hand, Maggie fell asleep.

At the end of half an hour it was over, and Maggie slowly unclosed her eyes.

Then glancing down as if searching for something, her lips moved faintly.

"What is it, dear?" Dr. Jay asked, bending near her lips.

"My ribbon," came faintly to his ear.

Picking it up from the floor where it had fallen, he laid it in her outstretched hand. Feebly she raised it to her cheek, her lips, then the hand fell, with a slight, tender pressure on that of Dr. Jay. The eyes met his with a world of tender, loving devotion, then their light faded, and little Maggie was safe from pain and sorrow.

JENNIE P. ARNOLD.

A Scotch Minister and his Beadle. From the Chicago News.

The late Dr. M. was removing on a "call" from one parish to another, and was making the rounds bidding the "tearful farewell" to his parishioners.

"Well," said he to one old lady, "it breaks my heart to leave you all, but I have given the matter prayerful consideration, and I feel that it is a call from the Lord." "Eh, doctor, a call frae the Lord is it? I'm thinkin', ye ta', doctor, gin the Lord hadna ca'd ye ta' bigger stipend He wud hae ca'd a lang time afore ye'd hear Him."

The same minister had a wonderful "beadle" by the name of Dawson. He was a great character—one of the few good specimens remaining. One day the doctor remarked that when he preached Dawson invariably settled himself down to a comfortable nap, but that whenever a stranger occupied the pulpit Dawson was wide awake and most attentive the whole time. The doctor accordingly taxed him with this. "Weel, Doctor," said Dawson "ye see, I can trust you, but a stranger neednae be weel watched for his fundamentals."

It was a brother of Dawson who was being examined as a witness before a committee of the presbytery which was "sitting" on a brother for drunkenness. "Did you ever," Dawson was asked, "see the Rev. Mr. Carmichael the worse of drink?"

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