

WARD MEMORIES.—II.

AH! those winters and summers in the old Ward, how quickly they went by, and what a good preparation they were for the harder work of a Hospital Ward, full of acute cases! The change seemed very sad at first. The long hours were full of anxiety and weariness, and the work seemed never done: as soon as one thin pale face began to improve, he disappeared into the convalescent department, and another, and worse perhaps, took his place. There seemed to be no time to enjoy their baby ways and funny talk, in the life and death struggle of heavy Ward work. You felt that you had grown years older and graver in a few months; but that feeling passes away a good deal, as a Nurse gets accustomed to her graver surroundings, and memory still treasures up many bright relics, even from the darker days.

One little figure comes constantly back to the mind when I think of those months—little Moses! Who that was privileged to know him can ever forget him?—poor, wee, humpy; perched up on his pillow at the end of his cot (he scrambled down into bed if he saw Sister or the Doctor coming), giving his opinion freely to the Ward in general about everything of interest in a child's world. "My real name is Bertie," he says, "but Sister calls me Mothes (Moses), toz I is so vewy wise;" and Moses was the name he went by in general society. He was a great favourite with the Resident Medical Officers, and rejoiced greatly in seeing them linger by his bed as part of his audience; encouraged by them his wisdom became supernatural, and his opinions would be received with peals of laughter.

The two little Fweddies! What pen can describe those imps of mischief?—mischief which, suggested by the one in the cot, was conscientiously carried out by the other, who could run about, and who looked up to his neighbour as "guide, philosopher, and friend." Bedridden Fweddie—if an active monkey with full use of his limbs (except when they were weighted with a couple of heavy scarpa-shoes) could be called so—was fond of casting all his clothing—bed and otherwise—overboard, and dancing about inside his cot, in a state of nature, to the great detriment of everything within his reach. This was a favourite trick of his, generally planned and carried out on the stroke of the visiting hour. He spent his days, poor mite, alternately weeping over his irons, in hopes of preventing the House Surgeon tightening the straps, and shouting with laughter and fun at the scrapes of his little friend, the other Freddie—scrapes which had been generally suggested by himself.

Active Freddie, being an ancient tracheotomy and speechless, was obliged to leave all expression of opinion to the head of the firm, which accounted for the extra volubility of Fweddie No. 1. Fweddie No. 2 always showed his dislike to authority by throwing himself on his face and kicking with all his might, having probably succeeded in pulling over a couple of chairs in his descent; and if the preparations for a dolls' tea party happened to have been set out on the said chairs, so much the better—it made a prettier clatter. This expression of his opinions had a grand and scenic effect, if arranged to take place at the moment when a party of ladies and gentlemen were being ushered into the Ward.

But, dear little man, he was not always bad. He generally began the day in an angelic mood. Freshly washed and dressed, a clean handkerchief stuck in his belt, and his little hands behind him, in imitation probably of some of the Visiting Physicians, he would walk gravely in front of Sister while she made her rounds, acting as a little herald of her approach. "I was just coming for you, Sister, but when I saw Freddy I knew you were on your way," Nurse would remark. He listened with deep attention to the bedside account of any patient, receiving with a smile of intelligence the accounts of the general depravity of human nature, as exemplified in the lives of his neighbours; never omitting his daily round, and generally making another in company of the Visiting Staff, probably in hopes of observing what effect the same information might have on their more experienced minds. At other times a spirit of evil took possession of him—a spirit of depredation on other boys' baskets, and destruction of other boys' playthings—which, in conjunction with instructions received from his partner in mischief, made him alternately the amusement and terror of the Ward. Dear wee Fweddie, long since at rest! What bitter tears were shed for you, as you lay, looking so peaceful and lovely, among the white flowers in the mortuary chapel, and how quiet and empty the Ward seemed without the constant pattering of your busy little feet!

M. F. E. H.

ROYAL INFIRMARY, NEWCASTLE.—PRESENTATIONS TO NURSE CAMERON.—Nurse Cameron, who has been a Nurse over eighteen years in the Royal Infirmary, upon the occasion of her retirement from her responsible position as Head Nurse in that institution, has been presented by the House Committee with a written testimonial, neatly engrossed; by the House Governor and Matron, with an electro-plate teapot; and by the Honorary Physicians, with an elegant alabaster timepiece, as a tribute of respect.

previous page

next page