

concealed her pain and weariness from the others. Was he going to order the special nurse and the operating room?

'You have gained in weight,' he observed. 'Some-time patients are here weeks without gaining a pound.'

'They are very unenterprising,' Paxton murmured through dry lips; the doctors laughed. Paxton looked up at the great doctor with an anxious smile.

'May I sit up to-morrow?' she asked. Then, as he did not answer, she said to herself, 'He has turned to stone. He is going to order the operating room!'

'No—you must not be too smart.'

'Smart—but not smart, Alecky,' pleaded Paxton, in a frantic effort to hold the bad news off for a moment.

Again the doctors laughed.

'That's it, exactly,' said the great doctor, beaming. He turned to the head nurse. 'I see you are going to get along without that special.' The furious flutter in Paxton's breast stopped short, and for a moment the sunshine seemed to darken. Then she gave a great breath of relief, and everything turned radiant round her.

The doctor went on speaking to the head nurse: 'It's not all your splendid nursing: it's her sense of humor. She keeps her spirits up. That other patient,'—he dropped his voice, but Paxton was sure he meant the Pink Girl—'I ordered a special for her, and worked so hard with her, yet—' He shrugged his shoulders, and came back to Paxton with boyish enthusiasm. 'You have given us positive proof,' he said to her, 'that our treatment in this case—a new treatment—will cure without an operation. We couldn't have done it without your help.' He turned to the other doctors. 'She deserves a reward—'

Paxton knew he was going to suggest something particularly nice, but the Pink Girl interrupted. She evidently had told her nurse that she must leave the verandah at once; for with many apologies to the doctors, the nurse began to wheel the Pink Girl's bed toward them. In order to make room for the bed to pass the doctors had to move away; they went, bowing good-bye to Paxton.

'Is that the vanity that can't bear to see some one else the centre of things?' Paxton asked herself.

When the head nurse came back a moment later, Paxton asked, 'So you have a patient who doesn't gain?'

She was eager to know something more about the queer Pink Girl. The glow of the doctor's approval had relaxed the nurse's reserve, and she answered readily enough.

'The doctor was speaking of a patient who is really an incorrigible,' she said, and her expression changed.

Her eyes, hard and resentful, sought the spot where the Pink Girl's bed had stood.

Paxton winced inwardly. 'My!' she thought. 'I am glad she doesn't look at me like that.' Then she asked, aloud, 'Why did he call me easy?'

'Because you are docile, and try to get well. Your sense of humor makes the nurses enjoy you.'

'The incorrigible has no sense of humor?'

'No more than a mummy!' snapped the nurse; then she softened. 'Some flowers have come for you. I know they are lovely, though I did not see them. They're in a big box.'

When Paxton saw the flowers, she realised that great moments have always treading on their heels the little ironies of life. On her table stood a huge funeral cross, evidently rescued from a grave, and refilled with red and purple dahlias. The card attached informed her that it was from distant cousins who lived in the city. This floral piece was both hideous and absurd, and showed utter lack of taste and thought in the senders. Paxton flushed. Compared with the satin slips and caps of other patients, her small belongings were poor enough, but at least they were refined and sincere. She had not been ashamed of them. But the shame of this floral atrocity!

For Paxton it was harder to be absurd than to face an operation. What would the nurses think of those ridiculous flowers? In a moment she knew. An English nurse who never smiled brought Paxton's

dinner tray, and, after casting a glance at the flowers, fled from the room, laughing. Freda, the maid, came for the tray. As she entered, her eyes were looking for the funeral piece, and at sight of it she sniggered. Paxton's face crimsoned. So all the nurses knew; the joke of the funeral cross was buzzing about the ward. The glow of the doctor's visit and her sense of humor died in her. She felt limp and desperate.

'You like my flowers, Freda?' she asked, curtly.

'You have had lovely flowers that—came—by mail,' Freda stammered; and then she tried to change the subject. 'Think if you be like the Pink Girl, as they call her. Nobody send her a flower, and she been here three months. In her room she keep an artificial rose on her bed at all the time.'

'An artificial rose!' Paxton exclaimed.

'Oh, she have many fine caps and things, but nobody send her flowers or come to see her since she been here. Her father is rich and live in the city, but he never come to see her—'

'Lives in the city, four miles away, and never comes to see her?'

Freda nodded. 'He never write her a letter, either. I bring all the mail, and I watch. All the nurses know. To-day he telegraph, "Glad you are all right. Stay as long as the doctor says." She threw it on the floor. When I swept her room I took it out and read it,' Freda concluded, shamelessly.

'Freda's right,' Paxton said to herself, when the girl had gone; 'no one has been to see her.'

In her mind she reviewed the Sunday visitors to the verandah. There was the fine young man whom the elderly blonde looked at in a way that made you know he was her son; the financier who came to comfort the lady on the pillow; the very old man who sat silent all day by the very old lady; the third cousins buzzing about her own bed; but—as Freda had said—no one ever came to see the Pink Girl. A father in the city, too, who never wrote! Paxton grasped the letters on her table, the mere touch of which filled her with a sense of protection. And the nurses knew! Of course the Pink Girl was an incorrigible, and had no sense of humor. Doubtless she did not want to get well. The pathos of the artificial rose on her bed made Paxton's eyes blur.

Suddenly, from the adjoining window of the Pink Girl's room, came a sound of suppressed weeping. It was a little wail repeated over and over. Paxton herself almost wept as she listened. Why did not the nurses soothe her? Then she remembered that the special nurses were at dinner, and in a flash she understood why the Pink Girl had chosen this moment to cry.

As suddenly as they had begun, the sobs ceased, and Paxton's straining ears heard the nurses coming down the corridor. She could imagine the Pink Girl trying to wipe off the traces of tears. She heard the nurse enter the Pink Girl's room, and a murmur of dialogue followed. Evidently the Pink Girl was demanding something; no doubt a fresh, vexatious toilet for an outing on the verandah. As Paxton listened with closed eyes, she stiffened with the surprise of a new idea. What if the Pink Girl's caps were not vanity, but a pathetic effort to appear gay and cared for, intended to hide her loneliness from the other patients?

'Are you asleep?' A nurse had entered softly, and stood beside the bed with an immense florist's box. 'I thought you would like to open the flowers yourself. I cut the string,' she added, as she left the room.

A fresh odor came from the box. As Paxton lifted the lid, she saw, with a thrill, a glow of color under the snowy paper inside. She tore off the covering that concealed the flowers, and gave a cry of joy.

A basket of orchids lay before her. Each blossom, in a cup-like paper, drooped with the round appeal of a baby's cheek. They were a mass of rainbow color that seemed to light the room. Only one person in Paxton's world was interested and rich enough to send them, and before she read the inclosed card, she knew that they had come from the great doctor. This was what he had meant when he spoke of a reward. Pax-