

'I'm very glad,' she said, with dignity. 'I was afraid he hurt you.' She turned as she spoke and toddled into the section opposite his, where a plain but kindly-faced elderly woman was sitting. She lifted her charge to the seat beside her, and the child rose to her knees, pressed her pink face against the window-pane and looked out at the snow that was falling heavily.

Dr. Van Valkenberg settled back in his seat and tried to read his newspaper, but for some reason the slight incident in which he and the little girl had figured moved him strangely. It had been a long time since any one had looked at him like that. He was not a person who aroused sympathy. He conscientiously endeavoured to follow the President's latest oracular utterances on the trust problem, but his eyes turned often to the curly head at the opposite window. They were well-trained, observant eyes, and they read the woman as not the mother, but a paid attendant—a trained nurse, probably, with fifteen years of admirable, cold, scientific service behind her. Why was she with the child, he wondered.

It was Christmas—not the time for a baby girl to be travelling. Then his glance fell again on the black bow among the yellow curls and on the white dress with its black shoulder knots, and the explanation came to him. An orphan, of course, on her way West to a new home, in charge of the matter-of-fact nurse who was dozing comfortably in the corner of her seat.

neighbor turned from the gloom without to the gloom within, and made an impulsive movement toward the drowsy woman opposite her. The nurse did not stir, and the little girl sat silent, her brown eyes shining in the half-light and her dimpled hands folded in her lap. The physician leaned across the aisle.

'Won't you come over and visit me?' he asked. 'I am lonely, and I have no one to take care of me.'

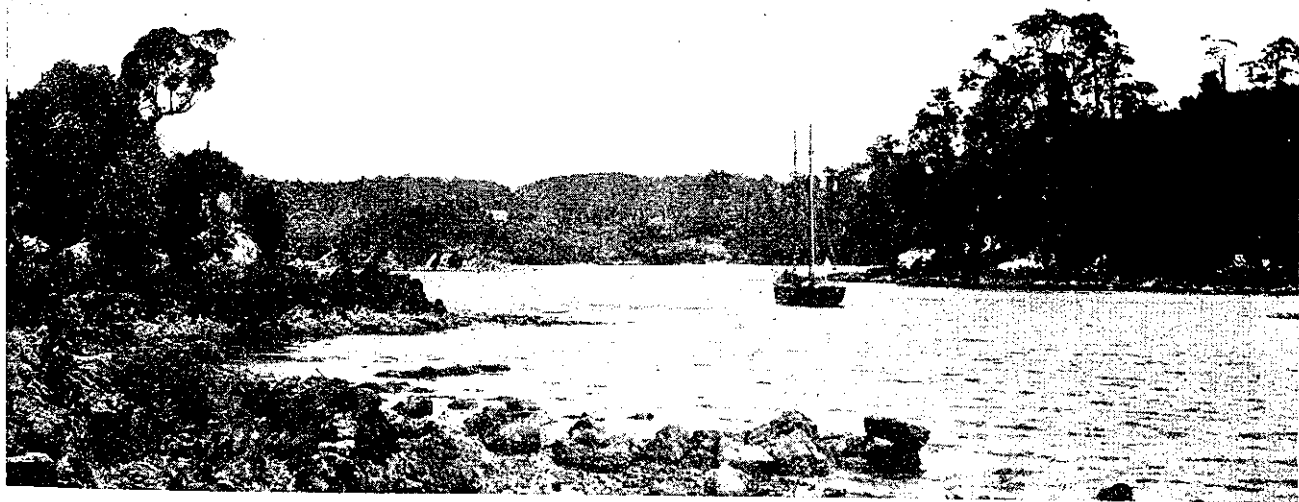
She slid off the seat at once, with great alacrity.

'I'd like to,' she said, 'but I must ask Nana. I must always ask Nana now,' she added, with dutiful emphasis, 'fore I do anything.'

She laid her hand on the gloved fingers of the nurse as she spoke, and the woman opened her eyes, shot a quick glance at the man and nodded. She had not been asleep. Dr. Van Valkenberg rose and lifted his visitor to the seat beside him, where her short legs stuck out in uncompromising rigidity, and her tiny hands returned demurely to their former position in her lap. She took up the conversation where it had been interrupted.

'I can take care of you,' she said, brightly. 'I taked care of mamma a great deal, and I gave her her med'cine.'

He replied by placing a cushion behind her back and forming a resting place for her feet by building an imposing pyramid, of which his dressing-case was the base. Then he turned to her.



VIEW OF BRAGG BEACH, STEWART ISLAND.

To whom was she going? Perhaps to grandparents, where she would be spoiled and wholly happy; or quite possibly to more distant relatives, where she might find a grudging welcome. Dear little embryo woman, with her sympathetic heart already attuned to the world's gamut of pain. She should have been dancing under a Christmas tree or hanging up her tiny stocking in the warm chimney corner of some cosy nursery. The heart of the man swelled at the thought, and he recognised the sensation with a feeling of surprised annoyance. What was all this to him, to an old bachelor who knew nothing of children except their infantile ailments, and who had supposed that he cared for them as little as he understood them? Still, it was Christmas. His mind swung back to that. He himself had rebelled at the unwelcome prospect of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day in a sleeping car—he without even nephews and nieces to lighten the gloom of his lonely house. The warm human sympathy of the man and the sweet traditions of his youth rose in protest against this spectacle of a lonely child travelling through the night toward some distant home which she had never seen, and where coldness, even neglect, might be wholly wrong in his theory of the journey, and he called himself a fool. Still, the teasing interest and an elusive but equally teasing memory held his thoughts.

Darkness was falling, but the porter had not begun to light the lamps, and heavy shadows were rising from the corners of the car. Dr. Van Valkenberg's little

'Very well,' he said, 'if you really are going to take care of me I must know your name. You see,' he explained, 'I might need you in the night to get me a glass of water or something. Just think, how disappointing it would be if I should call you by the wrong name and some other little girl came!'

She laughed.

'You say funny things,' she said contentedly. 'But there isn't any other little girl in the car. I looked soon as I came in, 'cos I wanted one to play with. I like little girls. I like little boys, too,' she added, with innocent expansiveness.

'Then we'll play I'm a little boy. You'd never believe it, but I used to be. You haven't told me your name,' he reminded her.

'Hope,' she said promptly. 'Do you think it is a nice name?' She made the inquiry with an anxious interest which seemed to promise immediate change if the name displeased him. He reassured her.

'I think Hope is the nicest name a little girl could have, except one,' he said. 'The nicest little girl I ever knew was named Katherine. She grew to be a nice big girl, too—and has little girls of her own now, no doubt, he added, half to himself.

'Were you a little boy when she was a little girl?' asked his visitor, with flattering interest.

'Oh, no; I was a big man, just as I am now. Her father was my friend, and she lived in a white house with an old garden where there were all kinds of flowers. She used to play there when she was a tiny