

eminent physician and a trained nurse, was naturally a simple and severely hygienic one, but here, too, her admirable training was evident. She ate cheerfully her bowl of bread and milk, and wasted no longing glances on the plum pudding.

Later, in the feverish excitement of hanging up her stockings, going to bed and peeping through the curtains to catch Santa Claus, a little of her extraordinary repose of manner deserted her; but she fell asleep at last with great reluctance.

When the curtains round her berth had ceased trembling a most unusual procession wended its silent way toward Dr. Van Valkenberg's section. In some occult manner the news had gone from one end to the other of the 'Special' that a little girl in Section 9, car Floradora, had hung up her stockings for Santa Claus. The hearts of fathers, mothers, and doting uncles responded at once. Dressing cases were unlocked, great valises were opened, mysterious bundles were unwrapped, and from all these sources came gifts of surprising fitness. Small daughters and nieces sleeping

with the scantiness of her own, induced that young lady to retire from observation for a short time and emerge clothed for general society. Even during this brief retreat in the dressing-room the passengers heard her breathless voice, high-pitched in her excitement, chattering incessantly to the responsive Nana.

Throughout the day the snow still fell, and the outside world seemed far away and dreamlike to Dr. Van Valkenberg. The real things were this train, cutting its way through the snow, and this little child, growing deeper into his heart with each moment that passed. The situation was unique, but easy enough to understand, he told himself. He had merely gone back twenty-five years to that other child, whom he had petted in infancy and loved and lost in womanhood. He had been very lonely—how lonely he had only recently begun to realise, and he was becoming an old man whose life lay behind him. Now an idea, fantastic perhaps, but persistent, haunted him. He crossed the aisle suddenly and sat down beside the nurse, leaving Hope singing her doll to sleep in his section.



SCENE AT TUPURUPURU, MASTERTON.

in Western cities might well have turned restlessly in their beds had they seen the presents designed for them drop into a pair of tiny stockings and pile up on the floor below these.

A succession of long-drawn, ecstatic breaths and happy gurgles awoke the passengers on car Floradora at an unseemly hour on Christmas morning, and a small white figure, clad informally in a single garment, danced up and down the aisle, dragging carts and woolly lambs behind it. Occasionally there was the squeak of a talking doll, and always there was the patter of small feet and the exquisite music of a child's voice, punctuated by the exquisite music of a child's laughter. Dawn was just approaching, and the lamps, still burning, flared pale in the gray light. But in the length of that car there was no soul so base as to long for silence and the pillow. Crabbed old faces looked out between the curtains and smiled: eyes long unused to tears felt a sudden, strange moisture. Dr. Van Valkenberg had risen almost as early as Hope, and possibly the immaculate freshness of his attire, compared

There was something almost diffident in his manner as he spoke.

'Will you tell me all you know about the child?' he asked. 'She interests me greatly and appeals to me very strongly, probably because she's so much like some one I used to know.'

The nurse closed her book and looked at him curiously. She had heard much of him, but nothing would explain this interest in a strange child. He himself could not have explained it. He knew only that he felt it, powerfully and compellingly.

'Her name is Hope Armitage,' she said quietly. 'Her mother, who has just died, was a widow—Mrs. Katharine Armitage. They were poor and Mrs. Armitage seemed to have no relations. She had saved a little, enough to pay most of her expenses at the hospital, and—' She hesitated a moment, and then went on: 'I am telling you everything very frankly, because you are you, but it was done quietly enough. We all loved the woman. She was very unusual and patient and charming. All the nurses who had had