

MY PRIVATE SCHOOL.

[CONTINUED.]
My grandmother was nurse-in-chief, but she often made me her deputy when the labor began to wear upon her.

The doctor had found some cards in the note-book of our patient, with the name, "John Jacob Deane" engraved on them; but we had no other clue to his identity.

It is impossible to watch over a patient, day and night, striving to be both brain and hands to him, without growing into a very strong feeling toward him of attachment or dislike. It was so with me, though I scarcely dared to whisper to myself to which order of feeling my own should belong. I thought of him all the time and if he had died it would have been a blow to me, albeit I had never heard him speak a conscious word.

It was on the tenth day of the fever, and he had been motionless for a long time. A sudden movement made me look up. His eyes were fastened upon me with a new expression. I knew that he saw me for the first time.

"Don't leave me," he said, faintly, as I was about to call my grandmother. I gave him the cordial which had been kept for the crisis, and he received it at once.

"Tell me all about it," he said. I was bound for Meriden, what then?

"You jumped from the carriage, when the horse was running, near our house, and were brought in insensible."

"Last night, I suppose, I must get down to the corner to-day."

"I suppose it was ten days ago; and I suppose, furthermore, that you could go up to the moon as easily as you could go down to the corner. Dr. Callin says you must be very quiet."

"Jupiter! Ten days! ten days! What house is this?"

"It belongs to my grandmother, Mrs. Sally Smith. I will call her to see you."

"Thank you; I can wait. Perhaps the sight of another stranger might fatigue me too much."

"But I thought he might safely be left alone for a while."

"He will talk all the time," said my grandmother when she went up stairs.

"I don't see but he is quiet enough," she said, coming down again in a few minutes.

"He says he wants you to write a letter for him."

I wrote one in this wise, from his dictation:

"DEAR MARY: I came to grief within a mile of your residence, and they tell me I have been light-headed for a matter of ten days. The business that I came on will have to be done all over again. Nevertheless, I will not 'abandon hope' till I enter at the door which, according to Dante, bears that inscription."

"Ever yours, J. J. DEANE."

"You must not speak another word," I said, imperatively.

"I promise, if you will sing again what you were singing when I found myself in the body this afternoon."

So I sang "Allen Percy" and "And Robin Gray," and two or three other ballads, of which I had a store, and my patient soon fell into a healthy sleep.

The next day he found his appetite, and from that time came back to health with wonderful rapidity. He was declared as a lamb to my grandmother, but with me he became the most exacting and troublesome convalescent that ever tried a woman's patience.

He preferred my grandmother's dainty dishes, and if I left him for an hour his bell would ring, and I went back to find his pillows on the floor and his head so hot that nothing but sponging it with cologne and stinging all the while would cool it. To keep him still I read aloud for hours, thinking far more of him than of my book.

We grew very well acquainted in these long summer days, till I went to Meriden on a shopping expedition. I found a thick letter at the post office for Mr. Deane, which had been lying there three weeks. It was directed in a lady's hand, and I thought the sight of it brought a shadow to my face.

He looked so glad to see me after my two hours' absence that I went up stairs in quite a flutter of spirits. Could it be possible that I was to taste at last the joy of which I had heard and read with unsatisfied longing? But I would not stop to think about it.

"Here's a letter for you that Job brought in while you were gone," said my grandmother.

I took it, and glanced at Mr. Deane. He sat by the open window reading one sheet of his letter, with knit brows, while the other lay beside him. Suddenly a light breeze whirled it out into the flower-plot, and I ran out to get it. It had not occurred to me to be curious about the letter, and nothing was farther from my thoughts than to read over the date of it; but the writing was large and plain, and as I stopped to pick it up, the first four words were burned into my mind like letters of fire.

"My own dear husband," Surely I should have been nothing to him, but, well, it was the fact of his having a wife at all was like a death-blow to me—like the instant before dying, when one sees at a glance the whole map of one's life.

I gave him the sheet without looking at him, and went up to my room.

Doubtless the "De. Mary" to whom I had written that first letter from his dictation, and I had foolishly taken it for granted that she was his sister. He had never spoken of her, but married people are always mysterious, and her price might be far above rubies, nevertheless. He had done nothing to make her jealous. Once he had taken my hand and touched it with his lips, and all the rest of the foundation of my castles in the air lay in looks more or less expressed.

But the above it appears, was all on my side. He was idle and grateful, and that was all.

I would go away at once, no matter where. Mr. Deane was so far recovered that my grandmother could easily take care of him, and attend to all his wants, and he could soon return to his own place. It would be something for me to remember, if nothing more.

Then I read my own letter, and it was my way of escape.

Ann Rachel wrote to say that "she was at death's door with neuralgia, and would I come to help her with the children?" She saw that door so often in her own account of her sufferings, that familiarity with it had rather hardened my heart toward Ann Rachel, and now I was ready to lay all the stress on her letter which it would bear.

"What will Mr. Deane say to your going away?" said my grandmother, when I had laid down on her mind my duty to Ann Rachel.

"I don't care what he says."

"Lor!" said my grandmother with a look which implied a two hours' speech at least.

"That letter was from his wife," I said, looking anywhere but at her.

To be continued.

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