

was; on the other hand her mother love pleaded that the boy be given the opportunity, and mother love is strong indeed.

'And I could play baseball, couldn't I, mamma?' the boy cried, looking from Mr. Blair to his mother and back at him again.

Still the mother did not decide.

'I have never taken charity, but you are very good. You put it so nicely that I don't mind much, though an hour ago I should have resented the offer of help from any one. Dr. Smith is a specialist; he treats only children. He has seen Jimmie several times, and has been kind to him. Would—I know it's asking a great deal,—but would you kindly come with us to his office? We are on our way there. It isn't far: only three or four squares.'

'I know Dr. Smith well. I have known him for years. Yes, I will go with you. I will gladly go with you.'

Half an hour later Mr. Blair, light of pocket and less heavy-hearted, said good-bye to the happiest mother and child in all that great city, and walked slowly back to the corner where he had first seen them. The noon hour was now long past and there were fewer people on the streets, and when he boarded the car he found it almost empty. He was indistinctly conscious that in the seat behind the one he chose there sat a Franciscan nun and a woman whom he had often seen in church. Miss Seymour was her name, he knew. He did not give them a passing thought at first; but soon the car stopped and gave no evidence that it would ever move again. A waggon loaded with coal had broken down on the track, and two men were working in a leisurely fashion to clear the debris out of the way, with every prospect that it would take considerable time. With the car at rest, Mr. Blair could hear every word spoken in the seat behind his.

'I was told that the cars were delayed about noon, and here is more trouble,' Miss Seymour complained.

The nun said nothing to this.

'I understand that there is a great deal of sickness just now. There always is at this time of the year. You must be overcrowded, Sister, overworked, too, no doubt.'

'Oh, no, not overworked! But every bed in the hospital is taken. We have even put extra cots in a few of the wards. We hate to turn any patient away. The children's room is particularly crowded. Yesterday we were obliged to refuse five little ones. I hope they were able to make place for them at St. Luke's.'

'It's too bad, too bad! Oh, if I had a million dollars! But no doubt I'd waste it if I had!' Miss Seymour said, beginning sadly and ending with a little laugh.

'You are too generous now, Miss Seymour; I know that. We are often afraid you rob yourself for us and our poor people.' Then, after a pause, during which conversation was made impossible by an automobile horn, she went on, 'I must tell you about Mother's "daydream,"—that is what she calls it. We all tease her a great deal about it. She wants to build a wing for children. She has had plans drawn up. It is to be very big—some day. If we had it we could fill it in a week and keep it full the whole year round. The only thing lacking is the money, but we tell her that is rather important!'

'It would be lovely! Has she any fund for it?' Miss Seymour inquired.

'Not one cent so far. That is why she calls it her daydream. But she thinks she will get this wing sooner or later. Our Lord will take care of His little ones, she says.'

At this juncture Mr. Blair rose and left the car.

'How impatient men are!' Miss Seymour remarked. 'They seem to be in a hurry all the time.'

She would have been mystified could she have seen that instead of either walking or hailing a taxi-cab to take him to his destination, Mr. Blair got on a car going in an opposite direction; that he rode for quite half an hour and left it at last before the gate of St. Francis' Hospital. At the door he asked to see the Mother Superior, and while he waited for her, paced

back and forth the length of the small room, lost in thought. When she came he had hardly introduced himself before he characteristically plunged abruptly into an explanation of the reason for his visit,—a reason which, long vaguely present in his mind, had in the preceding hour taken definite form. He was so happy that for the first time in years he spoke lightly, almost playfully.

'I hear, Mother, that you have a daydream.' And without pausing to explain where and how he had learned of it, he added, still smiling: 'I, too, have one. I have had it for several years, but it was shapeless until this afternoon.'

The little rosy-faced nun looked up at him in frank perplexity.

'Let me explain. I am talking riddles. On the car, half an hour or more ago, I overheard one of your Sisters tell a friend that you wish to build a wing to serve as a hospital for children. The community call it your "daydream," she said. Now I want to do something of the kind; it has been the desire of my heart for a long time, and—and will you allow me to do this?'

The Mother smiled at him.

'You are very good, very kind,' she said. 'I should be delighted to start a fund with whatever you can give. To do all would be too much, far too much, for one man. Only millionaires could afford it, and, unfortunately, they are rare. It would cost perhaps fifty thousand dollars to build as I wish.'

Mr. Blair frowned.

'You think I am extravagant,' she said, timidly. 'I hope not. St. Francis would not like that. It will all be very plain, very simple.'

'My daydream is on a bigger scale than yours, Mother. It would cost more than a hundred and fifty thousand dollars.'

When at last she understood what it was he offered to do, the Mother's eyes filled with tears. She longed to tell him all that was in her heart: how, for many years she had prayed for this; how discouraged she had sometimes grown, how she had persevered, trying to hope.

'You are too good, too good!' she cried, with a little sob that made the words eloquent. 'Oh, to think that the poor little children are to have a place for themselves at last! But are you certain you can afford all this?'

'Quite certain. I wish it meant a sacrifice. It doesn't. I have no children: my wife is dead, so it is easy for me. Besides, I am but paying a debt. I—I owe more than I can ever hope to pay.'

The nun, young though she was and childlike in her simplicity, was old in her dealings with every phase of human sorrow. She saw deep, and she saw quickly into aching hearts. She looked up at Mr. Blair with tender, pitiful eyes.

'This will pay all your debt, Mr. Blair, however great it may be. God is good and merciful.'

He believed her as implicitly as a child would have done, and went away consoled at last, no longer a man of stone.—*Ira Maria.*

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