

An Illness, and Its Result

It was a beautiful spring morning. The sunlight fell in golden splendor down upon the green earth, making the dew drops glisten and sparkle like costly diamonds. A soft and soothing spring breeze was blowing, gently stirring the delicate green leaves that covered the trees in front of Dr. Gage's small white cottage. The bosoms of the little birds that now and then alighted upon these trees seemed filled to overflowing with gladness, so joyously did they sing.

Such was the outdoor scene presented to the eye and ear of Dr. Gage as he sat in his small but neat office from whence, through open door and window, he could catch glimpses of the outside world. He was trying to concentrate his thoughts upon a new and important medicinal treatise; but sickness, sorrow, pain, and death seemed so out of harmony with the life, and light, and beauty without that he found it impossible to become interested in his book and fell into a fit of musing.

Suddenly his train of thought was cut short by the appearance of a messenger at his open door, who said, "Doctor, you are wanted at Mr. Raymond's. Carrie Raymond is very sick."

At this announcement the doctor rose hastily to his feet, and, saying, "I will go in a few minutes," began his preparations.

Upon reaching Mr. Raymond's, he found Carrie moaning and tossing with pain. After feeling her pulse he turned to Mrs. Raymond and asked, "What were the first symptoms of illness which you observed?"

She replied, "I went into the parlor this morning and found her there, seated on the floor, with both hands clasped on the back of her neck, and crying bitterly. I asked her what was the matter, and she said her neck hurt. She also complained of pain in the head. I took her to bed at once and sent for you," continued Mrs. Raymond.

"It is well you acted promptly," replied the doctor. "I fear it is a case of *cerebro-spinal meningitis*, a very dangerous disease. I will call again in the morning, when I hope to be able to decide for a certainty the nature of the disease." Then giving Carrie a soothing medicine to ease the pain, he left.*

As Dr. Gage had thought, it proved to be a case of *cerebro-spinal meningitis*, and, in spite of care and the precautions taken, Carrie rapidly grew worse. For weeks she tossed to and fro, refusing food, meanwhile growing more and more feeble, till it seemed to the anxious watchers that speedy death was inevitable. But still, life lingered in the feeble frame, and at the end of two months a change came, and the doctor pronounced her out of danger. He was observed, however, to critically examine the pupil of her right eye, which looked inflamed and had a thin, whitish scum over it. "Is there anything serious the matter with that eye, doctor?" asked Mrs. Raymond, anxiously. The doctor did not reply at first, but when the question was repeated he answered, "I fear the sight is destroyed." Then, seeing the look of deep pain on her face, he added, "It is quite common for the disease to affect the eyesight, but it is not always permanent; and her left eye is all right."

From this time on, Carrie improved constantly. Her appetite, which had been entirely lacking for several weeks, now became ravenous. She would eat all it was thought prudent for her to

*Note to readers: Some punctuation and sentences have been modernized for clarity. However, phrases that were common at the time Farlow wrote (for example, *deaf-mute* and *deaf and dumb*) have been retained.

have and cry for more. As she became more convalescent an unaccountable change was noticed in her manner. She did not appear to understand anything that was said to her, and all sounds, even the songs of the birds, which she had always delighted to listen to, were unheeded. Then, too, her conduct was at times so strange that her parents and friends were puzzled and could not account for it. Dr. Gage could not or would not advance any theory in relation to these peculiarities in her manner and conduct. As time went on these strange symptoms increased and grew more incomprehensible. Sometimes, without any visible cause, Carrie would burst into a fit of weeping, and all efforts to comfort her would for a time prove futile. At other times she would complain that someone was mocking her, and nothing could convince her that she was mistaken. She grew so timid that she could not bear to be left in a dark room, even though she knew she was not alone. As soon as the light was extinguished, strange, weird shapes seemed to fill the room, and she would shriek and cry with terror until the lamp was relighted. So all night long a lamp was kept burning in her chamber. Her parents wondered what could be the matter, as she was not naturally a timid child.

While they thus wondered, a solution of the mystery came in a very unexpected way. One day two ladies were visiting at Mrs. Raymond's when one of them noticed Carrie's strange behavior and thoughtlessly said to her companion, "Do you think Carrie has lost her reason?" The lady thus addressed gave her inquirer a quick, reproachful look, as much as to say, "Hush"; but Mrs. Raymond, who was in the room at the time, heard the question and saw the look which answered it, and a great pain filled her heart. Could it be, thought she, that Carrie, her bright, joyous Carrie, the pride of her heart, was doomed to go through life bereft of reason? The thought, with all its dreadful import, was almost more than she could bear. There now seemed no question of doubt as to the fact that Carrie's mind was deranged. Suitable

tests also proved, to their surprise and grief, that her sense of hearing was entirely gone!

These were dark days for Mr. and Mrs. Raymond. It seemed well-nigh impossible for them to discover any but gloomy aspects to the case, or even to find comfort in Cowper's beautiful lines.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace:
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

But God, whom they served, had not left them in this trying ordeal. He was still constantly watching tenderly over them and theirs.

Carrie's strength came back so slowly that months went by before she was again able to walk. As soon as she had far enough recovered to make it advisable, her father took her to a "water cure," hoping she might be benefited by the mineral waters, and also hoping to meet with a physician who made diseases of the eye and ear a specialty. But he did not meet such a doctor, and Carrie had grown so fearful of strangers that he found it impossible to induce her to remain long among them. They soon returned home again.

Carrie's physical health now improved rapidly, and her parents also saw, with joy, that her mental derangement was slowly disappearing. She was, however, very quiet, never answering any questions put to her. This was conclusive proof that she was indeed deaf. Human companionship now seemed distasteful to her. In summer she would often wander away alone into the woods and fields to play, talking, as she went, to the trees and flowers, or to some imaginary but invisible persons. These wanderings sometimes extended to such a length of time that, her parents growing uneasy, one of them would start out in search of the little wanderer, usually meeting her trudging along homeward with her apron gathered up to form a basket in which she would be carrying

mosses, shells, bright-colored pebbles, acorns, nuts, etc., or else with her hands full of ripe berries or beautiful flowers.

Mr. and Mrs. Raymond grieved sorely over Carrie's loss of hearing and made frequent efforts to secure medical aid whereby she might regain her power to hear, but without avail. Carrie herself was but faintly conscious of her loss. It dawned upon her mind only gradually as her reason returned. A friend, in commenting upon this fact, said, "I believe that God has some wise design in thus afflicting her, and that this darkening of the mind was sent temporarily to break the force of the grief and mental pain which a too sudden awakening to a full consciousness of her altered condition might naturally produce. Yes," continued the friend, "I feel convinced that good and not evil will result from this seemingly unmitigated misfortune."

God works in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform.

"And 'his ways are not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts.'"

Three years from the time Carrie became ill we find her fully restored, both bodily and mentally. She being now twelve years old, Mr. Raymond is advised to send her to the state institution for the deaf and dumb, to be educated.