

**H**er old patients ever remembered her with gratitude. A man called Chell, an engine-stoker, was twice in the hospital under her care, first with a dislocated ankle, severely cut; the second time with a leg crushed to pieces in a railway accident. It was amputated. According to his own account he remembered nothing of the operation, except that Sister Dora was there, and **that**, "When I come to after the chloroform, she was on her knees by my side with her arm supporting my head, and she was repeating:

'They climbed the steep ascent of heaven,  
Through peril, toil and pain:  
O God, to us may grace be given  
To follow in their train.'

And all through the pain and trouble that I had afterward, I never forgot Sister's voice saying those words." When she was in the small-pox hospital, avoided by most, this man never failed to stump away to it to see her and inquire how she was getting on.

There were, as she herself recognised, faults in the character of Sister Dora; and yet, without these faults, problematical as it may seem, it is doubtful whether she could have achieved all she did.

One who knew her long and intimately writes to me "A majestic character, brimming over with sympathy, but, for lack of self-discipline, this sympathy was impulsive and gushing. Her glorious nature, physical and mental, was marred by undisciplined impulse. Her nature found its congenial outlet in devoted works of mercy and love to her fellow creatures. How far she would have done the same under authority, I fear is a little doubtful."

Miss Twigg, who knew her well, writes me: "She was

a lovable woman, so bright and winsome. She used to come into our rather dull and sad home (our mother died when we were quite children) after evening service. She would nurse one of us, big as we were then, and the others would gather round her, while she would tell us stories of her hospital life. . . . She was a **real** woman."

There is one point in Sister Dora's life to which sufficient attention has not been paid by her biographers. It is one which the busy workers of the present day think of too little—namely, the writing of bright, helpful letters to any friend who is sick or in trouble. Somehow or other she always found time for that, wrote one who knew her well, and who contributes the following, written to a young girl who was at the time in a spinal hospital, and who was almost a stranger to her:

MY DEAR **MISS J.**—I was so glad to hear from you, though I fear it must be a trouble for you to write. I do hope that you will really have benefited by the treatment and rest. I am *so* glad that the doctor is good to his "children." Such little attentions when you are sick help to alleviate wonderfully. I wish I could come and take a peep at you. Did Mrs. N. tell you that she had sent us five pounds for our seaside expedition? Was it not good of her? Oh! we shall have such a jolly time. To see **all** those poor creatures drink in the sea-breezes! We have had a very busy week of accidents and operations. It has been a **regular** storm.\* My dear, it is in such times as you are now having that the voice of Jesus Christ can be best heard, "Come into a desert place awhile." Know you surely that it is God's visitation. Take home that thought, realise it: God **visiting you** Elizabeth was astonished that the Mother of her Lord should visit her. We can have our Emmanuel. I can look back **on** my sicknesses as the best times of my life. Don't fret about the future. He carrieth our sicknesses and healeth our **infirmities** You **know** infirmity means weakness after sickness. Think

\*A Yorkshire expression for heavy work.

## *Heroines Every Child Should Know*

of the cheering lines of our hymn: "His touch has still its ancient power." When I arose up from my sick bed they told me I should never be able to enter a hospital or do work again. I was fretting over this when a good friend came to me, and told me only to take a day's burden and not look forward, and it was such a help. I got up every day feeling sure I should have strength and grace for the day's trial. May it be said of you, dear, "They took knowledge of her that she had been with Jesus." May He reveal Himself in all His beauty is the prayer of

Your sincere friend,  
Sister Dora

It does not truly represent Sister Dora to dwell on her outer life, and not look as well into that which is within, as it was the very mainspring of all her actions, as it, in fact, made her what she was.

The same writer to the *Guardian* gives some sentences from other letters: "Take your cross day by day, dearie, and with Jesus Christ bearing the other end it will not be *too* heavy." "If we could find Jesus, it must be on a mountain, not in the plains or smooth places." "He went up into a mountain and taught them, saying," etc. "It is only on a mountain side that we shall see the cross. It was only after Zacchaeus had climbed the tree he could see Jesus. I have been thinking much of this lately. It is not in the smooth places we shall see Jesus, it is in the rough in the storm, or by the sick couch." "A Christian is one whose object is Christ." "I am rejoiced that you are enjoying Faber's hymns; they always warm me up. Oh, my dear, is it not sad that we prefer to live in the shade when we might have the glorious sunshine?"

It was during the winter of 1876-77 that Sister Dora felt the first approach of the terrible disease that was to cause her death, and then it was rather by diminution

## *Sister Dora*

of strength than by actual pain. She consulted a doctor in Birmingham, in whom she placed confidence, and he told her the plain truth, that her days in this world were numbered. She exacted from him a pledge of secrecy, and then went on with her work as hitherto.

"She was suddenly brought, as it were, face to face with death — distant, perhaps, but inevitable; **she**, who was full of such exuberant life and spirit that the very word 'death' seemed a contradiction when applied to her. Even her doctor, as he looked at her blooming appearance, and measured with his eye her finely made form, was almost inclined to believe the evidence of his outward senses against his sober judgment. . . . She could not endure pity. She, to whom everybody had learnt instinctively to turn for help and consolation, on whom others leant for support, must she now come down to ask of them sympathy and comfort? The pride of life was still surging up in her, that pride which had made her glory in her physical strength for its own sake, as well as for its manifold uses in the service of her Master. True, she had been long living two lives inseparably blended: the outward life of hard, unceasing toil; the inner, a constant communion with the unseen world, the existence of which she realised to an extent which not even those who **saw** the most of her could appreciate. To all the poor, ignorant beings whose souls she tried to reach by means of their maimed bodies, she was, indeed, the personification of all that they could conceive as lovable, holy and merciful in the Saviour. At the same time she judged her own self with strict impartiality. She knew her own faults, her unbending will — her pride and glory in her work seemed to her even a fault: and, in place of looking on herself as perfect

she was bowed down with a sense of her own shortcomings. At the same time — with death before her, she hungered for more work for her Master. His words were continually on her lips: 'I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is **day**; the night cometh when no man can work.' "

At last, in the month of August, 1878, typhoid fever having broken out in the temporary hospital, it was found necessary to close it, and hasten on the work of the construction of another. This gave her an opportunity for a holiday and a complete change. She went to the Isle of Man, to London, and to Paris.

But the disorder was making rapid strides, and was causing her intense suffering, and she craved to be back at Walsall. She got as far as Birmingham, and was then in such a critical state that it was feared she would die. But her earnest entreaty was to be taken to **Walsall**. "Let me die," she pleaded, "among my own people."

Mr. Welsh says: "On calling at the Queen's Hotel, Birmingham (where she was lying ill), I was told the doctor of the hospital (Dr. Maclachlan) was with her, and thinking they were probably arranging matters connected with the hospital, I did not go to her room, but proceeded to the train. I had scarcely got seated when the doctor called me out, and we entered a compartment where we were alone. He asked me when it was intended to open the hospital. I replied, 'On the 4th of November.' 'Then,' he said, 'that will just be about' the same time Sister Dora will die.'

"The announcement was to me a shock of no ordinary kind, for I had not heard of her being ill, and no one could have imagined, from the cheerful tone of a letter

I had received from her a week or so before, that there was anything the matter with her. Not being able to fully realise the true state of affairs, I asked him if he were jesting. He replied he was **not**, and that he thought it best to let me know at once, so that arrangements might be made for getting someone to take her place when the hospital was opened. I said, 'I suppose she is going to Yorkshire?' 'No,' he replied, 'and that is another thing I wish to speak to you about. She wishes to die in Walsall, and she must be removed immediately.'

"On Sunday (the day following) I saw the chairman and vice-chairman of the hospital. On Sunday evening I returned with Dr. Maclachlan to the Queen's Hotel, where he found his patient very weak. On Monday morning a house was taken, and the furniture she had in her rooms at the hospital removed to it. Her old servant who had gone to The Potteries, was telegraphed for, and arrived in a few hours, and by midday the house was ready for her reception. My daughter, knowing Sister Dora's fondness for flowers, had procured and placed on the table in the parlour a very choice bouquet; and when all was ready Dr. Maclachlan drove over to Birmingham, and brought her to Walsall in his private carriage.

"The disease was now making steady progress, and it was evident that every day she was becoming weaker; but she never lost her cheerfulness, and anyone to **have** seen her might have thought she was only suffering from some slight ailment, instead **of** an incurable **and** painful disease."

"A few hours before her death," writes **Mr. S. Welsh** "she called me to her bedside and said, 'I want you **to** promise that **you** will not, when I am gone, write any-

thing about me; quietly *I came among you and, quietly I wish to go away.*" And this desire of hers would have been faithfully complied with had not misrepresentations fired the gentleman to whom the request was made to take up his pen, not in defence of her, but in the correction of statements that affected certain persons who were alive.

In her last sickness when she found her end approaching, she insisted on every one leaving the room — it was her wish to die alone. And as she persisted, so was it, only one nurse standing by the door held ajar, and watching till she knew by the change of attitude, and a certain fixed look in the countenance, that Sister Dora had entered into her rest.\*

"It was Christmas Eve when she passed away, and a dense fog, like a funeral pall, hung over the town and obscured every object a few feet from the ground. Under this strange canopy the market was being held, and people were busy buying and selling, and making preparations for the great Christmas festival on the following day; but when the deep boom of the passing bell announced the melancholy intelligence that Sister Dora had entered into her rest, a thrill of horror ran through the people, who, with blanched cheeks and bated breath, whispered, 'Can it be true?' Although for seven weeks the process of dissolution had been going on before their eyes, they could not realise the fact that she whom they loved and revered was no more."

The funeral took place on Saturday, the 28th of

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\*This has been denied. Her old and devoted servant said: "Do you think I would let my darling die alone?" But it appears to me that Sister Dora's desire was one to be expected in such a spiritual nature; and in the statement above given it is not said that she was actually left in solitude.

December. "The day was dark and dismal, the streets, covered with slush and sludge caused by the melted snow, were thronged with spectators. . . . There was general mourning in the town; and although it was market day nearly every shop was closed during the time of the funeral, and all the blinds along the route of the procession were drawn. . . . On reaching the cemetery it was found that four other funerals had arrived from the workhouse; and as these coffins had been taken into the chapel there was no room for Sister Dora's, which had, consequently, to be placed in the porch. This was as Sister Dora would have wished, had she had the ordering of the arrangements, for she always gave preference to the poor, to whom she was attached in life, and from whom she would not have desired to be separated in death."

True to her thought of others, in the midst of her last sufferings, she had made arrangements for a Christmas dinner to be given to a number of her old patients, in accordance with a custom of hers in previous years; but on this occasion the festive proceedings were shorn of their gladness. All thought of her who in her pain and on her deathbed had thought of them. Every one tried, but ineffectually, to cheer and comfort the other, but the task was hopeless. One young lady, after the meal, and while the Christmas tree was being lighted commenced singing the pretty little piece, "Far Away," but when she came to the words:

**Some are gone from us forever  
Longer here they could not stay,**

she burst into tears; and the women present sobbed, and tears were seen stealing down the cheeks of bearded **men**.



The Walsall writer of "A Review" concludes his paper thus:

She is no idol to us, but we worship her memory as the most saintly thing that was ever given us. Her name is immortalised, both by her own surpassing goodness, and by the love of a whole people for her—a love that will survive through generations, and give a magic and a music to those simple words, "Sister Dora," long after we shall have passed away. There was little we could ever do—there was nothing she would let us **do—to** relieve the self-imposed rigours of her life; but we love her in all sincerity, and now in our helplessness we find a serene joy in the knowledge that to her, as surely as to any human soul, will be spoken the divine words: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

In Sister Dora, surely we have the highest type of the Christian life, the inner and hidden life of the soul, the life that is hid in God, combined with that outer life devoted to the doing of good to suffering and needy humanity. In the cloistered nun we see only the first, and that tends to become self-centred and morbid; it is redeemed from this vice by an active life of self-sacrifice.

I cannot do better than, in conclusion, quote from the last letter ever penned by Sister Dora:

"It is 2.30 A. M., and I cannot sleep, so I am going to write to you. I was anything but 'forbearing,' dear; I was overbearing, and I am truly sorry for it now. I look back on my life and see 'nothing but leaves.' Oh, my darling, let me speak to you from my deathbed, and say, watch in all you do that you have a single aim — *God's* honour and glory. 'I came not to work my own work, but the works of Him that sent me.' Look upon working as a privilege. Do not look upon nursing in the way they do so much nowadays, as an art or

science, but as work done for Christ. As you touch each patient, think it is Christ Himself, and then virtue will come out of the touch to yourself. I have felt that myself, when I have had a particularly loathsome patient. Be full of the Glad Tidings, and you will tell others. You cannot give what you have not got."