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THE HIRED CARRIAGE.

BY BERTIE BAYLE.

Well, yes, ma'am; as you say, we nurses do sometimes see very romantic stories under our eyes.

If I could write down all the family histories that I have seen and heard, dear, dear! what a book it'd make, to be sure! But you were asking me about Miss Ethel Sunderland.

I was sent for to nurse her through a dreadful attack of lung fever when she was only seventeen.

Her father was pretty nearly out of his mind about her, for she was the only child, and her mother was dead.

They had relatives, like other people, but none living with them, and the house was under the care of a regular housekeeper. But Mr. Sunderland was very rich, and entertained a great deal of company, so that Mrs. Wood, the housekeeper, had not time to regularly nurse Miss Ethel, who needed constant care.

She was the prettiest little creature, with big, soft brown eyes, and a crop of brown curls, and as sweet and patient as she was pretty.

All the winter she was kept in her room; but when the spring opened the doctor ordered her to have a drive outside the town every fine day, especially ordering that she was to be carried down the stairs, as she was very weak and still short of breath.

Mr. Sunderland, though he was a rich man did not keep a carriage. He had waited for that, he said, until Miss Ethel was a young lady.

So he went to a livery stable and ordered an open barouche for every fine afternoon, being particular to speak for a careful driver, and one strong enough to carry his daughter down the stairs.

Of course I was to go with Miss Ethel. She was so weak the first day that it was hard work to dress her.

As soon as she was rested after being dressed, I went down and called the driver to carry her to the carriage. As he came up the front steps, I thought he was one of the handsomest men I ever saw in my life, tall and strong, with dark curling hair, and big black eyes.

But, strong and tall as he was, no woman could have been more gentle. He lifted Miss Ethel as tenderly as a mother lifts a baby, and settled her on the pillows in

the carriage so nicely that she looked the picture of comfort.

When she thanked him, he said, "This carriage was built for Mrs. Elberston, and is hung very low, on easy springs. I was accustomed to carry her as I have carried you, so Mr. Elberston sent me to-day."

Mr. Elberston was the man who kept the livery stable.

Certainly no carriage could be more comfortable, and the driver's seat was on the same level as the back one where Miss Ethel was settled, while the driver and I sat in front.

He did not talk much the first day, but it was beautiful to see how careful he was in driving, and I could tell by his eyes that he was very much amused at Miss Ethel's chatter.

How her tongue did run! Everything gave her something to laugh or talk about, and just the faintest pink came into her pale cheeks, making her prettier

Well, we went to drive every day, and very soon the handsome driver chatted away with us as merrily as Miss Ethel herself.

His name, he told us, was Mark, and sometime, while he was perfectly respectful to us, you could see that it was not exactly in a servant's way, but that respect every gentleman gives a lady, or even a woman in my position.

And then, although I never had much education myself, I've been amongst ladies all my life, and we nurses have a great deal of time for reading, so I can tell when anyone has school learning as well as anybody, and Mark had.

He would tell Miss Ethel many things that she only knew a little about, but he had studied, and they would often use foreign words or whole sentences, as if they were just the same as English.

It all came about so easily, that we did not stop to think then how odd it was for her to be chatty with the driver, but after awhile I got uneasy. She was in some respects, my charge, and if ever two young people were falling in love with each other these two were.

All through April, May, and June we drove out every day. Mark knew every pleasant drive within miles of the town, and as Miss Ethel grew stronger we spent whole afternoons in pleasant, shaded places, bringing home great bunches of wild flowers, and, better than all, bringing health to the dear child.

In July we went to the seaside, to a quiet place, where we had a furnished cottage and two servants.

Mr. Sunderland came down often, always for Sunday, but we were alone most of the time, and then I knew the mischief those drives had done.

Well, when we went back to town I had no excuse for staying, and reported at the hospital for duty. I was very busy all winter, and could only call once or twice to ask for Miss Ethel. Her aunt had come home from Paris in the autumn, and Miss Ethel was having a gay winter, but she did not look strong nor happy.

I did not see her then for nearly a year for she traveled all the next summer, but in November Mr. Sunderland came for me. The old trouble on the lungs was threatening again, and the doctor had ordered Miss Ethel to Italy. Her father was going with her, but she wanted me, too, and I was glad enough to go.

I really loved her, and I was sure if she was ill that nobody could nurse her better than I could. I was shocked when I first saw her, she was so frail-looking; but she told me she danced herself to a shadow at Scarborough and Brighton, and would not own to being ill.

One day she asked me if I had ever seen Mark again.

"Old Mr. Elberston, who kept the livery stable, is dead," she told me, "and papa says he left a large fortune. But a stranger has the stable, and sent us a strange driver, I asked for Mrs. Elberston's carriage, but he said there was nothing answering my description in the stable."

I could not tell her anything about Mark, for the last time I had seen him was when he bade us a respectful good-bye the day before we went to the seaside.

Now, ma'am, comes the romantic part. Mr. Sunderland found out something, I cannot tell how or where, and a fine rage he was in.

He was too fond of Miss Ethel to storm at her, but he did talk to her about the disgrace it would be for her to marry a common hack-driver, and he was just in a panic to get away from town, though Miss Ethel told him she had never seen Mark excepting in the drives.

"Papa," she said, "you need not be afraid. He never made love to me as you have been told, never! I never spoke to him alone, and probably I shall never see him again."

(CONTINUED ON LAST PAGE.)