the deep,' read Captain Mostyn, and there his voice faltered. All hands gazed at him, all save his son, who gazed at the old Red Duster covering the canvas-sewn form that lay so still upon the stretcher.

'We therefore commit — this body — to the deep,' read Captain Mostyn again, and stopped for a space ere he went on with the words of the burial service for such as die at sea.

'According,' continued Captain Mostyn, 'according to the mighty working — whereby He — He is able — *to subdue all things unto Himself.*'

And then Captain Mostyn turned away and took his son's arm, and without a gesture, without another word, went falteringly through the cabin door and shut it after him; so that it was the mate who must raise a hand, must make to the stretcher bearers that final gesture at which we of the sea commit to the sea our dead.

I LIKE TUBERCULOSIS

BY RUTH REED

I

I LIKE tuberculosis. It is n't that I enjoy poor health, and it was not until I walked out of the sanitarium — an apparently arrested case — that I began to like it.

In July 1929, I began to cough, after getting wet to the skin in a glorious thundershower. Presently it seemed that my bathing suit and my dresses hung loosely on my body, and I went to the doctor. He examined my chest, weighed me, and found me wanting by twenty pounds. Still, he diagnosed my case as bronchitis, and gave me creosote. He thought I should rest, perhaps.

In September I felt well enough to start teaching; I had the first grade, and my small son and I went off to school together. I had an especially bright, cheery group. We had our own playground; through that golden September we had many of our classes out of doors. I have since been ever so glad that we did. My 'bronchitis' persisted, and, though I drank buttermilk and creamy eggnogs, I gained not a pound. Following the doctor's instructions, I rested: I lay down religiously from four to four-twenty each day — twenty minutes. I laughed at that rest later when I had to stay in bed twenty hours a day.

One morning I could n't get up. I felt no pain, but the thought of moving was unbearable. The next day I went to a chest specialist in a near-by city. He X-rayed me, gave me several tests, put me through a thorough examination. My temperature was 102.6; my pulse 125.

Quite calmly he told me that I had a moderately advanced case of tuberculosis. He said that it might mean from six months to six years — one could never tell — in a sanitarium away from my family. Away from my family! I think I smiled; I am sure I did not

show the panic I felt. I knew stupidly little about tuberculosis, so my first question was: —

'How infectious is it? I have been coughing since July in the same house with my husband and my son. How will it affect them?'

'Your husband is not so liable to infection.'

That was all. And I knew what he meant because he did not look at me — he turned his head away.

I think the sun was shining. I walked down the busy street aware of no one, aware only that I must go somewhere alone and think. I passed a church, but the door was locked. I found a bookshop.

I had to wait several hours for my husband to come for me, and I realized that I could plan nothing until I talked with him. I bought *The Closed Garden*, by Julian Green, and went to the drawing-room of a hotel, to read and wait. The streets seemed strange to me; I felt as if I were disembodied, aware of the bustle and hurry, but apart. Perhaps it feels that way to be nearly dead or quite mad.

You will remember that *The Closed Garden* is the story of two tubercular sisters; one is slowly dying and the other is slowly becoming insane. I did not know what the story was when I bought it.

We were a sombre trio as we drove back home. The child felt our depression; we rode with his hand in mine.

Something had to be done at once. I was getting worse rapidly. We tried tearlessly to find the plan that would be best for all of us. After considering all the possibilities, we decided to accept my mother's offer to care for small Bill. She was in New York State, and neither of us would see him, but she would care for him as well and as tenderly as I. My husband found a pleasant place to live, and I applied for admittance to the sanitarium at Hopemont, West Virginia.

During that week my little boy was my solemn shadow. I hardly dared to look at him. Together we packed our precious books — his books we had read together, books my husband had read to me. We packed the toys — Raggedy Andy with his faithful smile. We packed our favorite lamp. All our household gods we packed until the altar was bare.

II

The night I went away it rained. The train was there — great, black, and dripping — to take me away. We did n't cry, because we did n't want small Bill to cry. We stood there unable to speak. As the train pulled out I saw from the back platform my two men — the father six feet tall, his shoulders drooped, holding the son's hand, and the son's shoulders drooped. I shall always see them there, black against the station lights, despair in every line of their bodies. It was a long time before I could go back into the train.

A week later we three, who had been so close together, were many miles apart, the father in southern West Virginia, I in northern West Virginia, and the son in central New York.

Tuberculosis is common, yet I had never thought much about it. There must be others like me. We bought the Christmas seals; we had driven by tuberculosis sanitariums thoughtlessly. We had driven by this one. I had not realized that here were five hundred people — five hundred families broken up. I realized it now.

What a ghoulish lot of females we were in that receiving ward! Ten of us. I looked at the pale figure in the next bed and wondered what on earth I should do if she had a hemorrhage.

She told me afterward that she wondered the same about me. We were ten bewildered beings in a new world, ten bathrobed figures of all ages, shapes, and sizes — miners' wives, farmers' wives, laborers' wives, and schoolteachers, pattering around on a cold porch.

I was exhausted with grief and despair; I slept.

The next day we were herded into the so-called 'booby wagon,' and taken to the offices for examination. We were awed by the white-coated efficiency. I suppose efficiency is common in hospitals, but I was not very familiar with them. A dear little woman doctor with a red nose examined me carefully, thoroughly.

'You have a very marked infection,' was all she would say to my questioning.

It was n't customary to tell much, and she did not have time to tell me all I wanted to know about tuberculosis, anyway.

After the examination we were sorted out; some went to the hospital wards, some to the open cottage porches. I went to a cottage porch. Ten beds from the locker room, the last bed — the only one in which one could turn and see nobody. Bless that white wall; it saved me many an outburst! You know you would feel like an outburst sometimes, living with nine sick women all day, all night — no escape.

First I started out to learn what I could about tuberculosis. I got Dr. Brown's book and papers from A. E. Wiggam and the Eugenics Record Office. Suddenly one day I realized that I could never again be an active, busy, or very useful person. I knew that I should never again swim, or play tennis, or dance. A whole world of interesting, happy activities was closed to me. I tried to say to myself that there were many other things to take their place, as of course there are, but it was a long time before I could think of life without them. I began to wonder what this year or more of sanitarium life was going to do to me. I should be a different person when I emerged. What sort of person should I be?

III

About this time something happened that changed the emphasis of my questionings. Would there be any life for me at all? Two beds down, there was a young girl who was getting well. One morning she had one hemorrhage after another. They took her to the hospital — she lived two days. Any minute the same thing might happen to me.

Death was all around me. Out there in the night we used to talk about it. Several patients declared that a hoot owl's call presaged it, or the crack of the cottage beams, or the flight of a bird over one. Every time a poor little owl hooted one woman cried, and once she fainted. All buildings settle. Much to her horror two sparrows, Paul and Virginia, nested on the beam over my bed. I could n't interfere with family life and have them frightened away; they flew over me many times a day. I enjoyed the hoot owl, the moanings of the tired old wood, the rustle of wings over my head. I am afraid I enjoyed a little the atmosphere of horror and suspense that accompanied these frequent omens.

But unquestionably death was there; unquestionably it might come to me. In the dark I smiled at it. I did not want to die, but death did not frighten me. Life had been good to me. I had seen our son through babyhood. I did not want to leave him, but my mother was good to him, would always be until he was old enough to live with his father. I did not want to leave

my husband, but no one is indispensable. If I were to be useless, I preferred to die. I smiled at death in the dark, because life had been good to me.

Until death came, however, I must live on; or, if death passed me by, my whole life, torn as it was, must be reconstructed as soon as I was well.

I looked to see how the people around me were adjusting themselves to the cure. The occupants of those other nine beds were constantly changing. Some healed and went home; some went home because they lacked the courage to remain; some went to the hospital wards — to die. Though the individuals changed, personalities remained strangely the same.

The cure was difficult for the younger, unmarried ones. We others, approaching middle age, had had more of life and it throbbed less urgently through our veins. It was also more difficult for the old ones; they had lived normal lives too long to adjust themselves to a half-life.

There was always one conscientious cure-taker. I mean conscientious to the letter, to the exclusion of any expression of joy. She was one of those who led the prayer each night at 'lights out.' She did it stiffly, so that it always seemed to be sacrilege. She went home one day cured. That night we said our prayers silently, each one her own prayer.

There were always two older women who were shocked at our pajama-clad indifference. There was always one who insisted on being vulgar. There was always a gay, irresponsible one, always a sweet, good-natured one, always a chronic complainer, always a snob or two, always a busybody.

During that year I was too often critical of myself for getting so debilitated. I was impatient and bitter because life was going on without me. I missed my little boy unbearably. There was a continuous ache in my heart because my husband was far away. My former favorite time of day — four o'clock to dark — was a torment. But I grew better and became an apparently arrested case in spite of all that.

IV

Often during those months I used to think of the moment when, stepping off the train, I should see my son again. When Dr. Evans told me that I could go, I was suddenly impatient for that moment. The train could not travel fast enough. The long rest, the plain, nourishing food, the regular hours, had made me well and strong. I was eager to live again, eager to have my child in my arms.

He stood there on the platform; I braced myself for his rush to my arms. He stood perfectly still, wide-eyed, taller than I dreamed he could be. Sitting close to me at story time that night, he told me that he really was n't sure I was alive. It had been so long. He had dreaded that moment at the train for fear it would n't come true.

How good it was to have a room again, to ride through the country during that beautiful October! Things I had always taken for granted were now very precious. Although I must still take every precaution for months to come, I enjoyed life — simple, ordinary life — with a new zest.

Bill and I went back to West Virginia at holiday time; we were tremulously eager to meet his father. All the way Bill's eyes sparkled; we smiled — nearly laughed — each time we looked at each other. That was a happy Christmas.

It was then that tuberculosis became a screen between me and the world. It happens that I don't care for women's clubs and bridge parties. With tuberculosis I could afford to stay at

home and read, to be there with two cups of cocoa and marshmallows when Bill came home from school. While the ladies were 'aiding,' I could lie luxuriously reading. When my husband came home to dinner he could slip into a dressing gown, and we could read or play Russian bank all evening instead of rushing here and there being good fellows.

V

Those months were too precious to last. Spring came and brought the roses; the roses brought their heavy pollen. I had an especially severe attack of hay fever. Presently I was back in another sanitarium — a moderately advanced case.

This time I am not bitter, not impatient, not rebellious. Suddenly I am serene. I have two years or more of cure ahead of me, if I get well at all, but I am not appalled. Within these walls I am secure from joy, — yes, — but from pain also. I miss my son, — yes, — but with a new wisdom I know that he does very well without me. I miss my husband, too, but we have had happy years together that many people never know. I am a burden, but I have not always been one; I shall not always be one. My life is full of errors of judgment; I have stopped reflecting on them. That is very nearly as simple as it sounds.

Days do not drag; many of them are busy and full. When my breakfast tray comes, hot and fragrant with coffee, I am ready. My lipstick has been applied. It is remarkable how much courage a brilliant geranium gives one.

Anything may happen to-day. Perhaps a lot of mail, perhaps a new book, a little surprise of some kind. My friends are good as well as clever, and know how to make the days easier.

My locker is full of good books; each of them means a day or two chased away. When reading has tired my eyes I rest them on the hills and trees beyond my window. They are lovely in any weather, but they are loveliest on misty afternoons or when it is clear at dusk.

Half-life lying here all day? Yes. But every life is burdened with sadness and frustration. My world is singularly serene, free forever from small irritations, because I have learned how very small they really are.

I like tuberculosis.