Private Nursing in Victoria.

To say good-bye—It is generally unpleasant, and no one has to say it oftener than the private nurse: to no one does the stern policeman we call fate oftener address his inexorable "Move on" than to the members of our profession.

The Methodist minister has at least a year in each circuit, while we are fortunate if we do not have twelve removals in as many months. Like the pilgrim's guide in Bunyan's immortal dream, we see our charges past the Slough of Despond, over the Hill Difficulty, even through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and just as they are climbing the gentle slopes of the Delectable Mountains of Convalescence we bid them Godspeed and go on our way, and they see us no more.

I am feeling rather than thinking these things as I sit this winter afternoon beside the small Jehu who is to drive me to my next case, thirty miles distant. My mood, now that I have time to think—for my departure has been very hurried—is a rather mournful one. The convalescent whom I leave behind me has been a bad case, but a good patient, and I am indulging in regrets. I am going to a patient who is supposed to be dying, and as I take a backward glance at the pretty little town I am leaving, and think of the kindness that has been shown to me there, and the pleasant acquaintances I have made, who shall blame me if I feel inclined to wish that there had been no need of my taking this journey thirty miles further into the bush to an almost hopeless case, a strange doctor, and unfamiliar surroundings? Rousing myself from my reverie, I make up my mind to enjoy the present, and begin a conversation with the driver about the horses. To the inexperienced eye they have a world-weary expression that is not at all reassuring, and were I asked for a professional opinion I would say that the rest cure and a liberal diet might save their lives and improve their appearance. But the youth was eloquent in defence of his team.

"Wy, look at the one on the off side, 'e is an Arab steed, 'e is; used to be a racehorse before the boss bought 'im." "You mean the colour," I remark; "he is flea-bitten." "Talkin' about flea-bitten, miss," says this most uncomfortable companion, "you will know all about that when you stay awhile at the hotel over there; they keep about ten dawgs." I relapse into silence after this.

The country is flat and rather monotonous. My thoughts journey in a different direction, and very soon I find myself picturing the dear old city of Melbourne, "my ain fireside," and the familiar faces I have not seen for so long.

I wake up by-and-by, and find that it is 6 p.m. We have been two hours travelling, and have come about eight miles. I fidget, and want to know why we do not drive faster.

"The horses is a bit tired," says the boy; "what can you 'spect when they have been workin' in the dray all day?" For another hour we jog along, the boy stopping occasionally to inquire the way, and using the whip freely to keep the horses going. The further we go the lonelier grows the road, and the slower grow the horses, and the Arab steed has long ago given up pulling and is being dragged along by his partner. The air is becoming very cold, we are going to have a sharp frost. And now nothing will persuade the horses out of a walk, and it is with a sigh of relief that I hail a bush hut a short distance from the road. A rest for the horses, and the bliss of sitting near a fire for ourselves, is all we wish for at this moment. The owner of the mansion, a man about thirty, in coloured shirt and moleskins, now puts in an appearance, and after listening to our tale of woe, tells us kindly, but firmly, that there is a house a mile further on where lives a married man who will take us in, and in answer to our pleadings he still persists "that he is all alone, and a bachelor, and he is sure Mr. Blank will put us up at his place further along." Bachelor or Mormon, or whatever he is, how gladly should I have thawed for fifteen minutes besides his big wood fire. Dejectedly we find the road again, and now the boy leads the horses and I use the whip; but as my hands are frozen, and the lash catches in the harness every time, I am not much use. We struggle on, but the house of Mr. Blank (may the bachelor be forgiven for the pious fraud!) is nowhere to be seen, and at last, beside a clump of trees, where another road joins ours at right angles, the horses stand still and refuse to move another step. There is no choice, so when they have been taken out, and provided with a nose-bag each, I leave the boy and the horses, and start briskly away in the moonlight to look for some human habitation. For an hour and a-half I explore, but to no purpose, and return to the starting point. The horses and trap are still there, but the boy has vanished. After sundry calls and cooees, a sleepy, bedraggled-looking object crawls from under the buggy seat and remarks that "we will have to stay 'ere all night, something tells me that the 'orses won't go now they're cold."

Now, a night under the greenwood tree, in summer, might be rather a pleasant adventure, but to-night, when to stand still is to freeze, the prospect is not alluring. With all the dignity and severity that circumstances and my chattering teeth will allow, I say, "Well, you just listen to what I am telling you. You are to put the horses in and make them go." Rather sullenly he obeys, remarking that he "wouldn't mind so much if he knew which of the roads is the right one," but he finally decides, with the sage reflection that "whichever road we take, it must lead somewhere." Much to my delight, the horses condescended to jog along once more, and, were it not that my companion is very doubtful as to the road, my anxiety would be almost over.

"I couldn't help thinkin', Nurse," he says, "when I seen you walkin' down that road into the scrub, if any fellow was comin' along and met you unexpected-like wot a fright 'e would get." "I beg your pardon," I correct mildly; "you mean, what a fright I should get." "No fear," says this imp of aggravation, with a grin; "them things of yours," pointing the finger of scorn at my cherished uniform, "is enough to give anyone a start." Slowly as our horses go along, time passes by degrees. We begin to see signs of civilisation once again, and crossing the river come in sight of a tiny township, and draw up in front of the hotel, where we are welcomed by the before-mentioned "ten dawgs." I descend gladly, but very stiffly, from the trap, having accomplished the trip in seven hours or thereabouts, and hear in a kind of dream the doctor's welcome, "Here at last, Nurse. Can you go on duty at once? Mrs. —— is very ill, and they are all worn out."

So ends my journey, and so begins once more the struggle for a human life with that "dread figure draped from head to foot that keeps the keys of all the creeds."—From *Una*.

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