

Our Foreign Letter.

SOME INTERESTING CASES OF SMALL-POX IN THE EAST.



As "there is a special providence in the falling of a sparrow," so surely there is a special care over those who tend the sick, and I venture to think that anyone who may chance to read this letter will agree with me; it is also interesting to note while writing of the East that the first medical works ever written on the subject of small-pox were written by Orientals, Ahron, a physician in Alexandria, as early as the 7th century, and Rhazes, of Bagdad, during the 10th century, and it is the Arabs who are credited with the introduction of this terrible disease into Europe at the commencement of the 8th century, though some writers say it was prevalent in our continent long before the invasion of Spain by the Saracens. Be that as it may, the cases of which I am writing to you occurred in an Eastern hospital, and that year, about nine years ago, there was an epidemic of this malady in the town and surrounding villages. The Arabs attacked by this awful scourge were often very callous about it, and went in and out among their friends and neighbours quite gaily, and it was not until death had made its ravages in their homes that they could be made to understand the very contagious nature of the disease. During this wide-spread epidemic much was done for these poor people by taking them nourishing food and by teaching them in a measure some little lessons in cleanliness, but the task was almost beyond human strength or skill. For instance any precautionary measures taken on our part with regard to our own health were looked upon as cowardice and a fear of the disease, and often the women and children, though grateful, would laugh at us for our pains, and say: "Are you afraid, ladies? There is nothing to fear; this is only the *jadari*, and it is *min ullah* (from God)," and before one was aware of it, some young girl with outstretched arms, literally covered with scabs, would almost suffocate one with kisses. And then, oh, when very tired—just for a moment—what a sense of utter loathing succeeded our efforts! Yes, it was only for a moment, for with more pity came new strength from Him, our Master, who "had compassion on the multitude," and we could once more feel in those beautiful words of Christina Rossetti: "Yea, Lord, I will see in every sufferer, *Thee*."

One of the cases that came directly under my notice and care for a time was that of a woman in whom we had in a previous year been much interested. Her name was Nitfidgy, and she was admitted to Hospital on the supposition that she was suffering

from malaria or influenza. She brought her child with her, a boy of 16 months, who, curiously enough, had been born in the hospital after his father's death, and had been christened in the English Church under the name of Yohanna, which, being interpreted, is simply John. Nitfidgy was devoted to her small boy, and declared that only death should separate her from him. They were all the world to each other, and had no one else belonging to them, but just each other, so Johnnie had to be taken in too, and was soon quite at home in his birthplace, playing with other children, and feasting away at bread and milk or rice and gravy. He did not fret for his mother, but Nitfidgy was like one possessed without her precious baby, and, taking advantage of the few minutes the nurse was absent, she, with a temperature of 103.6, got out of bed and wandered to the balcony where the children were playing; finding Johnnie among them, she snatched him up and carried him back to her own bed. This was done in less than three minutes, and on re-entering the ward I found them in each other's arms. It was useless to protest, the only way I could pacify the mother was by putting the child in a small swing-cot in the corner of the ward, with a broad knitted bandage tied to the top of it so that Nitfidgy with the other end could swing her baby to and fro. All this was very trying to one's patience, more especially so as there was a big query as to the nature of this case: it was neither typical influenza nor malaria. Several cases of influenza accompanied by scarlatiniform rashes had been treated this season, which increased the difficulty in diagnosing Nitfidgy's case, as in some respects the symptoms were the same. The malaise, frontal headache, severe backache, rigors, high fever, nausea, were all present, some delirium also. One felt uneasy and suspicious over this uncertain malady, and daily hoped, as the French King used to say, "*les choses s'arrangeront*," which, Heaven be praised, they very shortly did, for on the third day the disappearance of the scarlatiniform rash and the appearance of a small-pox eruption removed all doubt as to the nature of the case. The patient was at once isolated, and as I could not be spared to be "special" our faithful ward-attendant, Im Saleem, was promoted to this honour, and told off to nurse Nitfidgy under the doctor's very special guidance and direction. And here followed such a cleansing and disinfecting of the rest of the patients, and nearly all the wards that I shall not soon forget. Johnnie had a carbolic bath, and returned quite happily to the other children, and his mother at last realised that if she wished to get well she must do her share by being quiet and obeying the doctor's orders. It was fortunate she was isolated directly the disease declared itself, for it proved to be a very severe case of confluent small-pox. Had Johnnie been able to see his mother he would not have recognised her, her face being swollen to twice its ordinary size, and from a comely, good-looking woman, she was now a picture of hideous disfigurement, to which there is no parallel in any other infectious disease. But the great thing to be done was to get her well, and every means was

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