

had no doubt but that she would be able to do for the nurses and "small-poxes" until they died—or recovered. She also argued that, seeing as how she had never had the small-pox up till now, it wasn't likely that she would go and catch it at her time o' life, and so there was no call for her to be vaccinated. And so fearful were the authorities of losing such a treasure that her arguments carried the day, and she was not vaccinated.

There was no difficulty in finding nurses—the one thing lacking was a patient. Daily the C.H.W.M.G. climbed on board the "Lily Ann" and dusted round, and reported to the Medical Officer of Health that all was in order. "Indeed," she said, "everything is that ready it would make you ill if you saw it."

Ten days after the "Lily Ann" had been pronounced ready for service a certain Mrs. Smith called at the Town Dispensary for "a bottle to cure the spots." The dispenser (who was new to the town), advised Mrs. Smith to see the doctor.

"Young fellow," said she, "do you think I have nothing to do all day that I can waste my time seeing a doctor? You just put me up a bottle and I'll be all right in a jiffy."

But the "young fellow" was obstinate, and at last persuaded Mrs. Smith to see a doctor. It transpired that she had small hard spots upon her face. The doctor inquired if she had had pains in her back.

"Yes; and so would you if you had to take in washing for a living."

"Have you had headache?"

"Oh, yes; but I don't take much notice of headaches. If you've got to earn your living you can't be always thinking of aches and pains."

To cut a long story short, the end of it was that Mrs. Smith was suspected to be suffering from small-pox. In vain did she protest "that she had often had the spots before, that the other dispenser had always given her a bottle of stuff that cured her in a day or two, and if only he had been here instead of that dunder-head there would be no talk of small-pox." Still protesting, she was taken on board the "Lily Ann," her children were taken to the workhouse and isolated, and the washing was put into strong disinfectant, and then, after much sorting and re-sorting, returned to its various owners. The local paper was enlivened for some time by very bitter letters from the owners of the aforesaid linen, about the abominable way in which it had been treated. Also Mr. Smith returned home from one of his frequent journeys in search of work, and made the lives of those in authority a burden to them by reason of his complaints: Firstly,

of the disinfection of his household gods; secondly, of the disgrace of having his children in the workhouse; thirdly, of the detention of his wife, thereby depriving him of her ministrations, and incidentally of his only means of support.

Neither were matters altogether satisfactory on board the "Lily Ann." As soon as the patient, with her attendants, were embarked, the boat was towed some distance from the shore and anchored. Now on the opposite side of the river lies another little town; and the rulers of this town, no less public spirited than their neighbours, were horrified at having an isolation hospital, or an apology for one, thrust under their very noses, and in forcible language demanded its immediate removal. The anchor was weighed, and the "Lily Ann" came to an uneasy resting place halfway between the two shores. The weather was stormy and the tides ran high, and the C.H.W.M.G. proved to be no sailor.

She begged the doctor every time he called to take her back in his boat to shore, but he was hard-hearted, and told her she must get used to it.

The doctor had his own worries, for his one and only small-pox case would not proceed on text-book lines, and he had never had the privilege of seeing a small-pox case before. As he sorrowfully remarked: "My hospital was in such a healthy town no one ever had any decent diseases."

The C.H.W.M.G. took possession of one of the beds in No. 2 ward, and one of the nurses took her place in the kitchen. The other nurse played the part of wardmaid and nurse to the C.H.W.M.G., while the small-pox patient spent her time on deck (wind and weather permitting), reviling the town councillors to passing boatmen. No power on board that boat could make her stay in the ward, much less in bed.

At the end of ten days the spots had disappeared. The nurse's good cooking, combined with plenty of fresh air and freedom from wash-tubs, had made the patient look a picture of health. There could be no shadow of doubt that she had been unjustifiably detained. Again was the anchor weighed, and Mrs. Smith, the two nurses, and the C.H.W.M.G. (now convalescent) were received by a large crowd, who cheered them enthusiastically, and by a band, composed of one cornet, one flute, two tin whistles, and a concertina, playing with great spirit "When Johnny Comes Marching Home."

I have it on good authority that no member of that Town Council has since that time worn a spotted tie.

M. H.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)