

On the other hand, Mr. Montagu's experience of a Nurse at home is vastly different, for we find him, when "Back in Bohemia," musing thus—

"Were you, by the way, ever under the influence of a paid Nurse?"

"I distinctly remember having suffered in that way myself once. I had scarlet fever and Hospital Nurse both at the same time. I got over the first complaint in three months, but I never got over the latter.

To begin with. Your wife is supposed to be released of all further concern in your welfare or existence. Of course she may think of you in a sad sort of way, as if you had been dead for years, but she can only call and leave her card at your bedroom door if she wants to know how you are getting on. You belong, as it were, to that Nurse, 'for better or for worse'; literally, for either, as a matter of fact. If the former, you make her a present, and for many reasons bless the day she left you; if the latter, well, someone else makes her a present—black gloves, deep-bordered handkerchiefs, &c., as outward and visible signs of an expression of grief which she could only have been expected to feel had you recovered, in which case they would not have been forthcoming.

"On the occasion I refer to just now (when I had the scarlet fever) I was waited on by the genuine article, one who goes by the appellation of 'trained' Nurse; not a 'party' who went out Nursing, but a real, unmistakable, gaunt, sombrely-clad, black-bonneted Nurse. Oh, no; there is no mistaking her. She wears just that 'faint' suggestion of a widow's cap, which seems to say, 'All flesh is grass, but these are only weeds'; and who—when for the first time she is ushered into your room—stalks up to you and says, in a condescending tone, 'Well, and how do you find yourself by this time?' addressing you as a child would a doll with a supposed attack of influenza, or an ordinary person might be supposed to address a very small child or an imbecile.

"Yes; and she did not stop there, either. She was a 'trained' Nurse in every sense of the word; she had her profession quite at the tips of her fingers. Apart from those tips, she confidentially told my wife, she was generally able to arrange with the undertaker; which were her own little perquisites, and nothing whatever to do with the Institution from which she came.

"On Monday she had certain references to make touching the dear departed generally; these she made to friends and relations, to get them into a condition, as it were, for a good long week of it.

"On Tuesday she would throw in a few special recent cases, adding to these according to the seriousness of the condition of her patient.

"On Wednesday the spare half-hours would be devoted to grave references, in your presence, to the beating of your pulse, and the high state of your temperature when last taken.

"At this stage the blinds are invariably pulled down—to keep out the sun, as she puts it, but really to impress upon the patient the seriousness of his case; in fact, the darkening of the room gives the exact tone and impression she wishes to convey to her surroundings.

"On Thursday she just remembers an exactly similar case to your own—a Mr. Joseph Simpkins, in which all the symptoms were identical. She begins this story in the morning, whilst she is sponging your hands and face, to 'bring you round a bit.' Towards the gloaming, just as you are dozing off for half-an-hour, she wakes you up by suddenly saying, 'They had such lovely feathers at Mr. Simpkins' funeral, and his widow's mourning was trimmed with the most expensive crape; it looked something beautiful.'

"Alas! You had, up till that moment, hoped against hope that poor Simpkins, whose symptoms were so similar to yours, had recovered.

"By Friday the house has nearly been reduced to subjection; one servant having given notice because she has heard curious noises, and the other because she is sure there is something wrong with the drains.

"On Friday night that Nurse makes her last and final effort to reduce the garrison and capture the fort.

"She tells you—they are her last trump cards—three ghoul-like stories, each more awful than the last; the third, that of someone (very like yourself in face) who got up after he was supposed to be dead, having been in a trance, and came to her room and asked her 'Where the deuce she'd put the whiskey.'

"Somehow or other you revive a bit after this, or rather begin to hope you may do so; they are not all like poor Simpkins, after all—for here, 'back from the jaws of death,' comes No. 3, anxiously inquiring after the whereabouts of the whiskey. There is something quite refreshing about it.

"By Saturday things have taken a decided turn. You rebel. You must have passed the crisis now, for you declare that if she does not leave you must; and as under the latter conditions you could only go in that direction whence no traveller returns, it dawns on someone that you have had enough nursing for the present, and you live."

It is a charming work, freely illustrated by Mr.

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