STORIES FROM THE DIARY OF A DOCTOR.

LITTLE SIR NOEL.

A moment or two later, Hart and I went upstairs to visit the little patient. The room in which he was lying was large and lofty. He was half sitting up in bed supported by pillows—his breath was coming quickly—there was a bright spot on one cheek, but the rest of the face wore a suspiciously blue tint.

I spoke to him cheerfully; he gave me one of his usual bright, affectionate glances, and put his hand into mine.

"Stoop down," he said, in a whisper.

I bent over him immediately.

"It takes my breath away to talk, but I'm awfully glad you've come," he said, with emphasis.

"I'm delighted to see you again, dear boy," I replied. "Now the thing is to get you better as quickly as possible. I will just listen to that troublesome little heart of yours, and see if I can't do something to set it right again."

"It's like a watch gone wrong," said Noel. "I wish it would tick properly."

"So it shall, by-and-by," I answered.

I took out my stethoscope and made the usual examination. The action of the heart was feeble—the pulse intermittent; but I quickly came to the conclusion that the disorder was functional. There was no organic mischief to be detected in any of the sounds.

"What are you giving him?" I said to Dr. Hart.

Sharp, who had been standing by the head of the boy's bed, now came hastily forward.

"Perhaps you want to see the prescription?" he said, stammering as he spoke. "I am very sorry—I left it at the chemist's. I took it there in a great hurry this evening, and brought away the medicine without waiting for it. Shall I run and fetch it?"

"No," replied Hart, "that is not necessary—I can tell you exactly what I prescribed, Halifax—digitalis, bromide of potassium, and a little of the alcoholic extract of aconite."

"I will talk the matter over with you downstairs," I said.

We left the room together.

After some consultation, I suggested the addition of ether to the medicine. I then proceeded to say:—

"The condition of the heart is not alarming in itself—there is no murmur, but there seems to be a slight dilatation of the left ventricle. You did quite right to order the extract of aconite—there is, in my opinion, no more useful medicine for such a condition. The boy will require rest and great care. The probabilities are that, with this, he will return to his normal condition within a few days. I should like, however, to have a trained nurse sent for immediately."

"I agree with you," said Hart. "I don't care for that fellow Sharp."

"The child seems attached to him," I replied; "but in any case he can't be with him all the time. The boy will do much better with a nurse. I happen to have a nurse belonging to my own staff who will be just the person to undertake the case. I will telegraph to her to come here the first thing in the morning."

I saw Mrs. Marsden, and spoke on the subject of the nurse.

"I shall be delighted to have a proper nurse," she replied. "I thought of engaging one before you came, but the child clings so to Joseph Sharp, that I didn't dare to propose that anyone else should take his place."

"He must have a nurse," I answered; "he can see Sharp now and then in her presence. The mere fact of his taking so much interest in the man's society is too much for him in his weak state."

I asked Mrs. Marsden if she could give me a bed, and spent the night in the house with my little patient. Towards morning I rose and went into the room. Sharp was lying on a stretcher bed in another part of the room. He didn't hear me when I came in. He was lying on his back with his mouth open. I thought his face repulsive, and wondered why the boy took to him as he did. I felt my little patient's pulse without awakening him. It was soft and regular; there was a faint moisture on the skin. He had already taken two doses of the altered medicine. I was satisfied with the result of the new ingredient which I had introduced. I was about to leave the room when Joe's voice, sharp and sudden, smote on my ears.

"You might make it five thousand pounds, Mr. Marsden," he said.

He turned over on his side as he uttered the words, and fell off into profound slumber. I was too busy and preoccupied to give the queer sentence a second thought, but I was destined to remember it later on. I went off now to telegraph for Nurse Jenkins, a nurse I knew and could depend on. She arrived in the course of the morning, and I established her by little Noel's bedside before I returned to town. Hart and I had a further consultation about the boy. The nurse promised to write to me daily, and I went back to London under the conviction that the child would speedily recover from his present attack.

I received a bulletin every evening from the nurse. On the third day her letter ran as follows:—

"I don't like my little patient's symptoms. I give him his medicine regularly, but I often feel inclined to leave it off altogether. Almost immediately after taking it, he complains of a feeling of sickness—he has even vomited once or twice. The vomiting is followed by a state of collapse more or less severe; the pulse is very intermittent. Dr. Hart is ill, and has not seen the child for a couple of days; his assistant promised to write to you about the medicine."

I expected a letter by the next post, but none came. I felt uneasy, and resolved to go to Bournemouth.

I arrived late in the afternoon and went straight to the Marsden's house. Just as I reached the door, it was suddenly opened and Sharp came out. He evidently didn't expect me, for he started violently and his ugly white face assumed a green tint—his small eyes almost started from his head.

"Oh, the boy is just the same," he said. "He's weak—I don't believe he'll do—glad you've come—didn't know you were expected."

"I have come," I replied, briefly, "in consequence of a letter from Nurse Jenkins. I am sorry the boy is not so well."

"He doesn't gain strength," said Sharp. "Are you going up to see him now?"

"Yes," I replied—I passed him as I spoke.

I ran quickly upstairs. No one knew I was in the house. I opened the door of the sick room. Mrs. Marsden was sitting by the little fellow's bed. He was lying flat on his back, his head was raised, he was breathing faintly, his eyes were shut. The nurse was arranging some bottles and medicine glasses in a distant part of the room. She turned on hearing my footsteps, put one finger to her lips, then beckoned to me to follow her into the ante-room.

"Oh, Dr. Halifax," she said, "I'm so relieved you've come. The child is, I fear, sinking fast."

"I hope not," I answered.

"But he is—he grows worse each moment. I am dissatisfied about the medicine. Dr. Hart is very ill—his assistant knows nothing about the case. It is a great relief to see you here."

"You ought to have telegraphed for me," I said. "Now don't keep me—I will ascertain the child's condition myself."

I returned to the sick room and took the boy's little wrist between my finger and thumb. The pulse was scarcely perceptible.

"He has been very sick again," said Nurse Jenkins; "he is sick every time he takes the medicine. I had almost decided not to give him another dose when you arrived."

"Bring me some brandy at once," I said.

The nurse did so. Mrs. Marsden, who had started to her feet when I approached the bedside, gazed at me with eyes dilated with terror.

"Keep quiet," I said to her; "the boy is too weak to stand the slightest noise—he will be better when he takes this."

I mixed a strong dose, and put a little between the child's lips. After some difficulty he swallowed it—his beautiful eyes were glazed—he looked at me without recognition.

"That's right," I said, when I became certain that he had really swallowed the brandy; "the heart's action will soon be better."

As I spoke I took out my hypodermic syringe and injected a little ether under the skin. The effect was instantaneous—the child's breathing became easier, and a little colour came into his ears.

During the next half-hour I administered small doses of brandy at short intervals, and tried every means in my power to induce heat. After a time success attended my efforts—the boy sighed—moved a little and opened his eyes wide—the state of collapse had passed. His cheeks now burned with fever, and the pulse galloped hard and fast in his little wrist.

I motioned to Mrs. Marsden to take my place by the bedside, and then asked Nurse Jenkins to accompany me into the next room.

"Show me the prescription," I said.

"I am very sorry," she replied; "I have just given it to Mr. Sharp."

It suddenly flashed through my memory that on the last occasion when I wanted to see Hart's prescription, I could not do so because Sharp had left it at the chemist's. The nurse went on apologizing.

"We were out of the medicine—I wanted to have some more made up. Mrs. Marsden's own chemist lives some way from here, and Mr. Sharp suggested that if I gave him the prescription he would get it made up by the chemist close by."

"How long is it since Sharp was here?" I asked.

"Just before you came—he rushed into the room making quite a noise. The child was very weak at the time. He came close up to the bed, and looked at the little fellow for two or three minutes. To tell the truth Dr. Halifax, I never liked the man, but he must have been much attached to the boy. I seldom saw such a look of agony on any face. I can really describe his expression by no other word."

"Are you quite sure, nurse, that Sharp has not been alone with little Noel since you had the charge of him?"

"Quite; I have actually lived in the room. Mr. Sharp has been to see Noel once or twice every day. The little fellow delighted in his visits. Mr. Sharp used to imitate the birds—little Noel generally fell asleep while he was whistling."

"What is the name of the chemist who usually makes up the medicine?" I asked.

"Howell and Jones—their shop is close to the sea at the bottom of the hill. Howell and Jones are the chemists Mrs. Marsden used to employ when she lived in their old house. She thought that Noel's medicine might as well be made up at her own chemist's."

"Have you any of the medicine left?" I asked.

"No, the last dose is finished—the bottle was forgotten to be sent to the chemist's this morning—that is why Mr. Sharp rushed off with the prescription in a hurry. The hour is past now when the child ought to have his medicine."

"I should like to see the empty bottle."

Nurse Jenkins went to look for it. She came back in a few moments.

"I left it on the wash-hand stand in that room," she said. "It is not there—I wonder if Mr. Sharp put it in his pocket?"

"It doesn't matter whether he did or not," I replied.

My suspicions were fully aroused. There was more than anger in my heart at that moment.

"Do not say a word of what I suspect, nurse," I said, "but my impression is that there is foul play somewhere. The medicine which Dr. Hart and I prescribed could by no possibility have the effects which you describe. I am going immediately to see Howell and Jones. Give the boy a dose of brandy if there is the least return of faintness, and don't allow Sharp near the room on any terms."

I left the house, hailed the first cab I saw, and drove to the chemist's shop. I entered quickly; a tall, serious-looking man was standing behind the counter. I asked him if he was a member of the firm.

"I am Mr. Howell," he replied.

I took out my card and gave it to him.

"You have been making up medicines for a patient of mine," I said, "a little boy of the name of Sir Noel Temple. He is living with one of your customers, Mrs. Marsden. You have made up medicine for the child several times."

"I have Dr. Halifax."

"I want to look at your copy of the last prescription."

The man turned to fetch his book.

"May I ask, doctor," he said, as he handed it to me, "if the child is better?"

"No; he is suffering from serious collapse and weakness."

"That seems scarcely to be wondered at," remarked the man. "There is a special ingredient in your prescription which surprised me—niconitin seems quite a new drug to order in cases of heart failure."

"Niconitin?" I exclaimed, horror in my tones. "What can you possibly mean? There was no niconitin in the prescription. Such a drug would act as direct poison in a case like the child's."

"Nevertheless, it is one of the principal ingredients in the prescription, doctor. Look at my copy—here—you see, the proportion is large—I have made up this medicine three or four times."

As the man spoke he turned his book towards me and laid his finger on the copy of Hart's prescription and mine. With a glance my eye took in the names of the different ingredients. The chemist was right—a large proportion of niconitin was one of them. This drug, as is well known, is the active property of tobacco. Its effect upon the heart would account for all the symptoms from which the child was suffering. Taken in quantities here prescribed, it would cause vomiting, collapse, and feeble action of the pulse. In short, its effect on the irritable heart of my little patient would be that of direct poison.

"Do you mean to tell me," I said, in anger, "that you, an experienced chemist, would dispense a prescription so manifestly contradictory without referring to the doctor who wrote it?"

"I spoke to Mr. Sharp about it," replied the man. "I even pointed out the inconsistency. He replied that the case was peculiar, and that niconitin was necessary as a sedative. Had it not been for Mr. Sharp, whom we know so well——"

"That will do," I interrupted, "I have no more time to waste over words. I shall probably want to see this book again. Meanwhile, give me a piece of paper, I must order another medicine."

I hastily wrote out a prescription for a strong restorative. This medicine was supplied to me, and I went back as fast as possible to the Marsdens' house.

Mrs. Marsden came downstairs to meet me.

"How is the child?" I said to her.

"Better; he is in a natural sleep."

I took the bottle of fresh medicine out of my pocket.

"Give this to nurse," I said. "The child is to have a teaspoonful every quarter of an hour. By the way at what hour does your boarder, Mr. Sharp, come home?"

"Not until evening, as a rule, but it so happens that he is in the house at the present moment."

"Where?"

"In his bedroom—he ran upstairs ten minutes ago. He asked first if you were in. Do you want to see him?"

"Yes, I do. Which is his room?"

"I will send for him."

"No; tell me which is his room, and I will go to him."

My manner surprised her. She gave me a brief direction. I rushed upstairs and entered Sharp's room without knocking.

The fellow was standing by a small portmanteau which he was hastily packing. When he heard my steps he turned—his face became ashy pale—he looked almost as if he would faint.

"Now, look here," I said, closing the door and walking straight up to the man "I have discovered the whole of this villainous plot. If you don't confess everything immediately, you will find yourself in the hands of the police in a few moments' time. In short, neither you nor I leave this room until you have told me everything."

The fellow went on his knees in his terror—he covered his face with his shaking hands.

"Get up," I said, in disgust. "I can't speak to you nor listen to you in your present position."

He rose and tottered towards a chair—he was really too weak to stand.

"I am glad you know," he said, with a sort of gasp; "yes, I am—I'm glad its all known. I couldn't have gone on with it—I'd rather be hanged than go on with it for another hour."

"Tell me your story quickly," I said; "I have not a moment to listen to your sentimentalities—the child's life hangs at this moment in the balance."

"Is there a chance for him, doctor?" said the man, looking full up at me.

"Yes, yes, if you'll only be quick and pull yourself together."

"Then I will—my God, I will—I don't care about anything in the world except the little fellow's life. Half an hour ago I stood by his death-bed. My God, it was torture to stand there and look at my own work!"

"Speak," I said; "If you don't tell me what you know at once, I will send for the police."

Sharp gave me another terrified look. I saw by the expression in his eyes that, whatever his sins, he did at last repent now.

"It was this way," he began: "I was Marsden's tool. I don't want to blame him over much, but I was his tool from the first. He wanted the boy to die, and he wanted to get off himself scot-free. As soon as ever he heard who the child was, he began to plot this fiendish thing. He dragged me into it—I struggled against him, but he was strong, and I had no power. He knew one or two things against me, and he held them over my head. I agreed to help him. I wasn't a week with the boy before I began to get fond of him."

"You can leave that part out," I interrupted, with heat.

Sharp paused as if someone had dealt him a blow.

"Marsden went to America," he continued. "He promised to give me £4,500 on the day he entered into possession of the child's estates. I was always studying drugs, and he suggested that I should give the boy something to bring on an attack of the heart, and then that I should tamper with the doctor's prescription. I had been studying the effects of tobacco taken in excess, and it occurred to me that niconitin would do the deadly work. That's all. The boy has been taking large doses of niconitin disguised in your medicine for the last fortnight.

"Where's Marsden now?" I said, when the fellow paused.

"I can't quite tell you—somewhere in America—for God's sake, don't give me up to him—he'd murder me."

"Your future is nothing to me," I said, "but I shall take the precaution to lock you up in this room until I know if your little victim is to live or die. If he lives, you can go; if not——" I did not finish my sentence, but, turning the key in the door, ran quickly downstairs. Mrs. Marsden was waiting for me in one of the passages.

"What is the matter? Why were you so long with Mr. Sharp?" she said.

"Come in here—I have something to tell you," I answered.

I opened a door which stood near—we entered a sitting-room—I closed the door behind me.

"I can't conceal the truth from you, Mrs. Marsden," I said. "I have made an awful discovery—that poor little fellow has been the victim of a fiendish plot."

She interrupted me with a cry.

"No, no," she began, "no, don't say it—no, it's impossible—he's far away—he is bad, but not so bad as that."

"I pity you from my heart," I answered, "but your husband is bad enough for anything—he left his tool behind him—Sharp was his tool. I am only just in time to save the boy."

I then briefly told Mrs. Marsden of the discovery which I had made at the chemist's.

Her horror and agitation were excessive; she, at least, poor woman, was fully innocent.

"I must take the boy away from here," I said. "I am sorry—I know you have had nothing to do with it, but because you are that scoundrel's wife—I must take the child away from you as soon as ever he is fit to be moved."

"I submit," she answered. "The fact is, I would not have him now on any terms. Oh, what a miserable woman I am—why did I ever listen to my husband? Why did I ever consent to receive the child? Oh, he is a fiend—he is a fiend—why have I the misfortune to be his wife?"

I had no reply to make to this—it was time for me to hurry back to my little patient's bedside. He was very ill. For the next few days his life really hung in the balance. The case was such a peculiar one that I resolved not to leave him. Nurse Jenkins and I watched by him day and night. After two days, the extreme weakness became less marked, and gradually and slowly the heart recovered tone and strength. After a very slow convalescence, little Sir Noel became much better. I brought him back to Harley Street—he is still with me. I mean to keep him until his mother returns to England. As to Sharp, I gave h m his liberty when I saw that the boy was likely to live. I have not heard of him since.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

WORLD'S TALLEST STRUCTURES.

A Water Works Tower in Cleveland Taller Than the Washington Monument.

The tallest chimney was built at Port Dundas, Glasgow, Scotland, 1857-9, for F. Townsend. It is the highest chimney in the world(454 feet), and one of the loftiest masonary structures in existence. It is, independent of its size, one of the best specimens of substantial, well-made brick work in existence. In Europe there are only two church steeples that exceed this structure in height—namely, that of the Cologne Cathedral (510 feet), and that of the Strasburg Cathedral (468 feet). The great Pyramid of Tizeh was originally 480 feet, although not so high at present. The United States outtops them all with its Washington Monument, 550 feet high, and the tower of the Philadelphia Public Buildings, which is 537 feet high.

The Eiffel Tower, at Paris, France, surpasses all other terrestrial metal structures with its altitude of nearly one thousand feet. The "Great Tower," for London, England, in course of construction from designs of Mr. Henry Davey, C. E., will outtop all metal structures, being built of steel, and its extreme height will be 1,250 feet when finished.

The highest and most remarkable metal chimney in the world is erected at the imperial foundry at Halsbrucke, near Frieberg in Saxony. The height of this structure is 452.6 feet, and 15.74 feet in internal diameter, and is situated on the right bank of Mulde, at an elevation of 219 feet above that of the foundry works, so that its total height above the sea is no less than 711.75 feet. The works are situated on the left bank of the river, and the furnace gases are conveyed across the river to the chimney on a bridge through a pipe 3,227½ feet in length.

The highest artificial structure in America is the water works tower at Eden Park, Cincinnati, O. The floor of the tower, reached by elevators, is 522 feet above the Ohio River. The base is 404 feet above the stream. If the height of the elevator shaft be added to the observation floor the grand total height is 589 feet.

The highest office building in the world is the Manhattan Life Insurance Company of New York city; its height above the sidewalk is 347 feet, and its foundations go down 53 feet below the same, being 20 feet below tidewater level, making a total of 400 feet. The foundations consists of fifteen masonry piers, and are carried by the same number of steel caissons. The latter were sunk to bedrock by the pneumatic process. The cantilever system was used for the foundations.

Love at a Cottage.

Mrs. McCue—Biddy, shtop thot kissin' at th' front dure, an' send Paddy Moiles off about his business.

Biddy (innocently)—An' did ye hear any kissin', mother?

Mrs. McCue—I heard phwat sounded as much loike a kiss as wan pig's squeal is like another.

Paddy (gallantly)—Sure, mum, it was only me a-spittin' on me hands t' get ready ur me long walk home.

THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT

COMPOSITION OF THE GREATEST LEGISLATIVE BODY.

The Make-up of the British House of Commons Numbers Six Hundred and Seventy—The Lawyers Contribute the Largest Contingent—Population of the United Kingdom—Some Curious Facts.

Many persons have very erroneous ideas about the composition of the British House of Commons. Some believe that the landowners and members of the aristocracy constitute a majority, and that they rule unchallanged. Others are of opinion that the military and naval services are unduly represented, and that they consequently engineer all sorts of outlays for their own benefit. Another section contend that the brewing interest dominates the country. In reality nothing can be further from the truth than these beliefs. The following summary will give a good idea of the make-up of the House of Commons, which all told numbers 670.

There are 26 bankers and financiers, 19 brewers, distillers, and wine merchants, 4 diplomatists, 11 doctors, and 15 farmers, The gentry and landowners number 105. not one-sixth of the House; there are also 31 journalists and newspaper proprietors, 12 labour representatives, 150 lawyers (Cromwell's "sons of Jeruiah"), 42 soldiers, ranging from the rank of captain upwards; 4 sailors, including one admiral; 89 merchants and manufacturers, and 10 professors and lecturers; together 518. The miscellaneous occupations, trades, and professions number 152, giving a grand total of 670. Thus the lawyers contribute

THE LARGEST CONTINGENT,

numbering nearly one-fourth. Adding together the merchants, manufacturers, bankers, and financiers, their number exceeds that of the gentry and land-owners; it is therefore clear that so far as class-interests are concerned the latter are not even the second strongest. The small number of brewers, distillers, and wine merchants, of whom Ireland and Scotland return their full proportion, shows that the outcry of some Radicals that the local option fiasco of Sir William Harcourt largely influenced the result of the general election is not well founded. It locally unseated him by a great majority, but its influence elsewhere has been vastly overrated; in the majority of the constituencies it was positively nil. The electoral battle which gave the Unionists a majority of 152 was fought upon the question of Home Rule. Practically, with rare exceptions, both sides in Parliament obey the party whip.

The Registrar-General's report shows that the total population of the United Kingdom is now 39,136,000, it having overtaken that of France. It is made up (leaving out hundreds) thus:—England and Wales, 30,394,000; Ireland, 4,586,000; and Scotland, 4,155,000. The increase since the census of 1891, totalling 1,403,000, is, excluding hundreds, as follows:—England and Wales, 1,391,000; and Scotland 129,000; but Ireland (mainly caused by the feeling of insecurity) shows a decrease of 118,000. These official figures illustrate some curious facts which will ultimately lead to parliamentary representation on

THE BASIS OF POPULATION.

The true proportion should be one member for every 58,400 souls. On that basis Ireland should only have 79 instead of, as now, 103 members, a diminution of 24. This would practically reduce the Nationalists from 82 to 62. Wales would lose four members, Scotland having its right number, England would therefore get 28 more. London, which has returned six Unionists for every single Gladstonian, ought to have 14 more members. England, Rosebery's "predominant partner," returned 349 Unionists to 113 Gladstonians, more than three to one. Therefore 28 additional members, if in the same proportion, would give 21 more English Unionists to seven additional Home Rulers. There would be a diminution of at least 23 Home Rulers from Ireland and Wales, which would on the present basis reduce the Home Rulers, after allowing for their share of the 28 transferred to England, from 259 to 243, and increase the Unionists from 411 to 432, thus raising the present Conservative majority of 152 to 189, a Parliamentary predominance of either side unknown for the last 63 years. It will, therefore, be seen that the Radical cry of "one man one vote" would, if honesty carried out, greatly strengthen the Conservatives; but the Gladstonians, that adopt from Hudibras, were and are anxious "to compound for 'one man one vote,' where they have a mind to, by damning 'one man one vote' where they have no mind to," consequently they have strongly opposed equal electoral districts. But John Bull has shown tha he don't like trickery.

A Curious Railroad Contract.

The Great-Western railroad, of England, has just had to pay $500,000 to free itself from the obligation to stop every train at Swindon station for ten minutes. In 1841, before the road had reached Bristol, it made an agreement for ninety-nine years with a firm of builders to hold every train carrying passengers, "not being sent express or for special purposes," for a reasonable period of about ten minutes, at Swindon, in consideration of the erection of suitable refreshment rooms, for which a rent of a penny a year was to be paid. The railroad soon found out the inconvenience of the arrangement and tried to break it. The courts in 1846 and in 1872 held that "express" did not mean in the contract what is now meant by an express train; but the price asked for the annulment of the concession was always more than the company was willing to pay. After a fight of over fifty years it has been driven by the competition of other roads to buy out its opponents, and the ten-minute stop of fast expresses at Swindon is now a thing of the past.