

The Free Press Short Story

The Patient in Room Six

MARTHA P. SIMMONDS

DONALD McGOVERN walked briskly along the dark, narrow street. It was a nuisance, this extra land must be secured and added to the mission compound to get the hospital within the walls! To the young intern, going back at night for a last look at a patient, this half-mile walk seemed almost as black an outrage as the ramshackle building that served as hospital. Donald was young enough to be impatient with conditions that interfered with efficient carrying out of responsibility.

Kurd and fierce Afghan, men of Bokhara and Turkistan, quiet and subdued Armenians, met and passed him by, for all the many people of Persia met in Teheran, the capital city. When he turned into the quiet side street on which the hospital was located, however, life ceased as suddenly as though it had been cut off. The houses almost closed in on each other, so narrow was the passage-way.

Donald's foot struck an object, nearly hurling the young man to the ground. Catching his balance, he hit the obstruction with his other foot, and heard what sounded like a faint moan. Quick as thought, he drew his American flashlight out of his pocket and turned it on the figure. It was that of a young man, about his own age, dressed as a Mohammedan, and evidently the victim of a bitter attack. His face had been cruelly hacked with the murderous knives whose work Donald had so often seen, and there were deep stains on his clothing. No time to lose!

Donald looked up and down the street, but there was not a sign of life. To attempt rescue might draw a knife to his own back; yet to go for help might cost the life of the young man, who was slowly bleeding to death. With scarcely a hesitation, Donald stooped over the body. From the case he always carried, he extracted gauze, hastily made a tourniquet for the gash in the left arm, and put a compress over the worst body wound.

Feeling his strength on the slight body, he then lifted it and started toward the hospital gates. This was all the day's work. He heard not a sound. Evidently the attackers had been certain of their aim and had thought death imminent. They were probably looking away, safe in the teeming life of the over-populated city.

Some time later Donald McGovern held out his hands to be stripped of the rubber gloves. One learned, in Persia, to take precautions first for unspeakable diseases, loathsome and infectious bodies, came to the hospital. This young man had been clean, however, and lay now in quiet bed, his face bandaged until nothing showed but one eye, the nose and the mouth, his slight wiry body barely living.

"Better send Nurse Johnson to me. Let Brown take care of that ward alone for the rest of the night."

In a moment the quiet white-robed nurse entered. "We've put a badly wounded young Mohammedan in Room 6, Nurse Johnson. I want you to take the case to-night, and watch him closely. He's already had a hemorrhage from that left arm, before I picked him up, and there's danger. If there's any change, send for me immediately. I'll ask Doctor Hardesty to look at him the first thing in the morning, but I think not to-night unless there's a turn for the worse. He's overworked with all these ugly operations and needs a little rest."

He then gave her directions as to medicines. The head nurse came in. "Doctor McGovern, we could find nothing to identify the patient. He must have been attacked by robbers who took everything he had."

"We'll take care of him just the same. Perhaps we'll hear a report of some one missing. Or when he begins to improve, he can tell us who he is."

Out in the chill night again, going home for a little rest, Donald's mind raced excitedly from one thought to another. His father was a missionary, and Donald lived at home. He had been born and brought up in Persia, leaving it only for his American medical education, coming directly back to Persia for his internship.

Thus, always in his thinking, the problems of his missionary father mingled with the problems of the overworked ramshackle old building that served as hospital, the free clinic which had never yet been able to finish with all its patients in any one day! Doctors, nurses, supplies—how they were needed! How his father needed money and help! How! Worst of all, however, they needed land.

"Son," said his father at breakfast next morning, "I'm almost ready to give up."

"You, Dad, give up?"

"No, not really. But how can we go on working against all this superstition and hostility? All Akbar owns the land we want and he's bitterly against us. He's been to the government officials too and now they won't even sell that space on the other side of the compound. His price for his own land is outrageous. He's determined to drive us 'Jesus people' out of the country entirely. I don't know what to do. Our hands are tied. We need everything. And here, where we have scarcely enough to pay what things are worth, there must be unfair-

ness; we are charged double and treble a reasonable price. I thought the authorities would see what we were doing with the clinic. But only the poor people and the outcasts come there! I thought the hospital and the school would show them, but all the wealthy, the powerful people, seem to be actual enemies!"

"Well, Father," said Donald, rising, "there isn't much to do but carry on, y' guess. They're hurting themselves worst of all, in not accepting what we could give them. Maybe there'll be a way to show them after awhile. We'll just have to wait."

He walked along the street, however, almost angrily. How he wanted that new hospital! How he fairly ached for the proper equipment and the means with which to really use his good training! Worst of all was the unspoken fact which lay in the background. Both he and his father knew that a man as powerful as All Akbar might influence the government strongly enough until they could do nothing, and even the mission station must be abandoned.

There are ways, polite ways, of bringing about such a thing in Persia. It made Donald bitter. The "Jesus way" was a difficult one indeed!

"No change, Nurse Johnson?"

"Very little."

"I'll watch him awhile, soon as I finish the rounds."

Back beside the young Mohammedan, Donald McGovern saw the one unbanded eye open, look at him intelligently. He sat down beside the bed and took the young man's pulse. "That one eye watched him, ceaselessly. 'Feeling better?' asked Donald quietly, in Persian.

"The young man did not answer directly. 'Where?' he questioned faintly.

"You are in the mission hospital, the Jesus house."

After a pause, the pale lips formed the word "Mohammedan."

"That's all right," answered Donald absently, adjusting bandages. "The Jesus way is for everybody. The Jesus doctors help all who need."

"Price?"

"No price at all if you cannot afford it. Only what you are able to pay."

The eye closed, wearily.

"If you will tell me your people, I will let them know." The patient gave no answer.

So it was for two days. Donald dressed the wounds gently, and came and went often. Meanwhile the young man lay, watching doctors and nurses, listening, saying nothing.

The third morning, as Donald entered the hospital, Nurse Johnson approached him. "Your patient is much better. He says that when the Jesus doctor comes, he will tell him his people and have a messenger sent."

The young intern smiled. "Jesus doctor" somehow held special emphasis for him, for he could never forget the things he had learned as the son of a missionary. Words of the "Jesus way" came to his lips as easily as medical terms; yet against the discouragement of these recent months his soul had chafed, until sometimes, in the back of his mind, he wondered if all the sacrifices were worth while.

He was walking down the hall in his white coat when suddenly, quietly, the place came alive with Mohammedans, fierce-looking fellows carrying knives. It seemed like a fantastic nightmare to Donald McGovern. At the thrust of a scimitar he stood against the wall, hands up, guarded by a particularly ugly-looking fellow. One dark-browed man strode about, opening doors, looking in rooms, all in sinister silence. Donald heard others above him, too. To his questions,

his entreaties even, he received no reply. A long while he stood wondering, the sharp blade against his side. Then came the sound of feet retreating from upstairs. A message was passed along in a twinkling the place was clear.

"What does it mean?" asked Donald, meeting the head nurse on the stairs.

"I haven't the faintest idea." She was very pale. "I've hurried around to the patients and they seem all right up here. I don't suppose they were half so alarmed as we."

"Probably not. But there's something back of it."

Upstairs he met Nurse Johnson coming quietly from the young Mohammedan's room. "Who were they? What—"

"I don't know at all."

"Well, one of them came into the room and talked to my patient."

"So that's it!" He turned abruptly and went to the door she had just closed. He crossed to the bed. "Can you tell us what this means? Have we offended some one?"

"No, sahib! May your shadow never grow less. My honored father just learned by chance of my presence. He thought harm was intended."

"How could he think that?"

"Because he has thought the 'Jesus way' came to bring trouble and sorrow to us."

"The Jesus way is gentle and kind. The Jesus house brings healing and life."

"I know, but my father did not."

"He understood, then, when he saw you here?"

"Yes, when I told him how you took me in and cared for me. He was the enemy of Jesus people. Now he is the friend."

Donald McGovern laid sensitive fingers on the young man's wrist. "That's very good news. Now try to sleep a while. This has been a shock to you."

"The young man, however, persisted. 'You will see my father? You will come to my house when I am well?'"

"I am always busy, but—"

"My father would thank you."

"He doesn't need to. That you will be healed is my thanks."

"So I tell him, of Jesus people. He cannot believe such a gentle, kind way."

"But it is true. Sleep, now."

"My father wishes you to accept gifts."

Donald McGovern shook his head. "It is not necessary. I want nothing."

"But he wants to give. He has riches—caravans on the desert, ships at sea. My father will give you a bag of pearls for the things you need to heal sick people with, and land for a Jesus house of healing. And the men who came today to kill you for what he thought you had done with me shall work to get materials and to build it. He and I are forever your friends."

Donald McGovern gazed at the young man stupidly. Delirium? No, that one dark eye was clear and intelligent. Donald saw the walls of the new hospital rising. He saw shining instruments for every need. But where—"Your father—"

he began awkwardly.

"My father is All Akbar," said the young man simply.

CANADA'S RUBBER INDUSTRY

Although producing no raw rubber, Canada now ranks among the leading countries of the world as a manufacturer of rubber goods. Few articles of commerce bring Canada into touch with more countries than rubber, and strangely enough it is in selling rubber products made in the Dominion rather than buying rubber that Canada has dealings with so many countries.

Canadian factories use some eighty million pounds of rubber and gutta percha in a year. About half of the output is automobile tires and rubber tubes, about one-third is rubber footwear and the remaining includes a long list of products, chief among which are belting and hose. The annual value of rubber products made in Canada has only twice been below fifty million dollars in the last twelve years. About three-quarters of the production is for home use, the other quarter being exported to almost every corner of the globe. Tires alone go to more than a hundred countries.

Weekly Garden-Graph

Written By
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For Central Press Canadian



In order to have a bountiful yield of good-sized potatoes, the foliage of the plants must be kept healthy. This is especially important because the food for the potato itself is really manufactured in the foliage. Anything which destroys the foliage tends to injure and dwarf the development of the potatoes underground.

When potato plants reach a height of four inches they should be sprayed every 10 to 14 days with Bordeaux mixture, or dusted with copper-lime. This dusting should not be done during the heat of the sun. Early morning or in the evening are the best times to spray the plants.

The accompanying Garden-Graph shows the first tell-tale signs of blight on potato plant foliage. Unless prevented or cured by frequent dustings, these brown patches on the leaves spread until the entire leaf and stem becomes infected; and this in turn checks the root development underground and curtails the yield of potatoes.

CAREFUL

Antique Dealer: "This vase is 3,000 years old and this is a modern imitation."

Customer: "Really? May I handle them?"

Antique Dealer: "Yes, but please don't mix them up."

SEASONED

Teacher: "Can anyone tell me what happened after Napoleon mustered his army?"

Pupil: "Yes, sir, he peppered the enemy and took the citadel by assault."

Teacher: "Sit down, my lad. I'll have no sauce from you."

THE SAFE, SENSIBLE WAY TO RELIEVE CONSTIPATION

Every one knows the dangers of constipation. Pills and drugs only bring only temporary relief. That's because common constipation is due to meals low in "bulk."

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HATE IS NEGATIVE

To hate is negative. To forget leaves room for constructive and profitable thinking. No individual can continue to grow big and useful while constantly harboring hate. Hate your job, and you will soon have no job. Hate another man, keep talking about this man, and soon you will have a lot of people mistrusting you.

GOOD ADVICE

The curate prided himself on his oratorical powers. He was describing the downward path of the sinner, and used the metaphor of a ship drifting and going to pieces on the rocks.

A sailor in the audience was deeply interested.

"The waves dash over!" cried the curate. "Her sails are split! Her yards are gone! Her masts are shivered! Her helm is useless! She is driving ahove!"

There seems no hope. Can nothing be done to save her?"

The sailor rose in his seat, his eyes wide with excitement.

"Let go the anchor," he shouted.

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Premier King Chats with Archbishop at Garden Party



Among the many distinguished guests who attended a garden party given by the Archbishop of Canterbury at London was Rt. Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada. The party was held at Lambeth Palace, London. The above photograph shows the Canadian statesman and the Archbishop chatting about—well, who can say what distinguished men talk about at informal gatherings?

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