

A HASTY WORD.

AN INDIAN EPISODE.

B. Company of the Royal Meath Rangers, then stationed at Lucknow, was out cholera-dodging. That is to say, the dreaded Asiatic scourge had broken out in this particular company and they had been obliged to leave the cantonments and go out under canvas ten or twelve miles away, lest they should spread the disease among the rest of the regiment. The two unfortunates who had first been stricken were removed to a temporary hospital several miles away from both camp and cantonments, and then the rest of the company awaited developments. In such cases it was usual to remain under canvas for ten days; if no new cases developed themselves during that time, the disease was regarded as stamped out, and the company returned to the cantonments; if, on the contrary, there were fresh cases, the patients were sent back to the hospital and the camp was moved ten or twelve miles in a different direction, the object being to get outside the circuit in which the cholera was travelling. Hence the expression, cholera-dodging.

B. Company seemed particularly unfortunate this time. They had been out nearly two months, and during that time had moved around the country six or seven times and had been upon the point of returning to barracks more than once, when fresh cases of cholera had broken out among them and they had been obliged to move to a new camping ground.

A spirit of discouragement had fallen upon the company, for it seemed as though the dread disease had marked them for its own. Most of the women and some of the men prayed. The rest either fell into a dull despondency or became wildly reckless, and drank and swore with the abandonment that seems characteristic of Godless natures when threatened with imminent peril. Christmas was near at hand, but that season of hope and joy brought very little comfort in its train to the death-threatened camp, and the festivity which it usually awakens among soldiers was utterly wanting that year. It was hard to be merry when every day or two saw the disappearance of life-long comrades and friends, some of them spirited away in the dead of night, leaving no trace behind but the mournful message, "taken to the cholera hospital."

Every day the doctors made the round of the camp to see that each family had a supply of chlorodyne and brandy on hand to be taken at the first symptoms of cramp or cold; and to insist upon the wearing of warm under clothing and woollen socks or stockings, the great object being to prevent chills and colds, for it is easier to avoid taking cholera than to cure it after it is taken.

In the midst of so much sadness and danger, it might naturally be expected that the ties that bound families together would be strengthened, and that all bickering and quarrelling would be laid aside. But human nature will assert itself under the most unfavorable circumstances, and so it happened one day that a certain Sergeant Connors and his wife had a few hot words before he set out upon his daily duties.

The quarrel arose over some trifling matter, and had one or the other been blessed with self-control it would have blown over harmlessly; but Jim Connors was quick tempered and so was his wife, added to which, they had been kept awake nearly all night by their sick child and were tired as well as cross. One word led to another and at last Mrs. Connors flashed out with, "I hope I'll never see your face again," and turned away to attend to the baby which had begun to cry. She was one of those numerous women who are continually saying things in anger that they do not mean, and her heart smote her at the reproachful "Nora!" that fell from her husband's lips. All the anger had died out of his face and he only looked shocked and pained. But, though Mrs. Connors regretted her hasty speech almost as soon as it was uttered, she was still too irritated to acknowledge it and resolutely avoided meeting his gaze. Sergeant Connors sighed and left the tent, fastening on his waistbelt as he went; and his wife took up her daily duties, with a leaden weight on her usually light heart. She had been married only three years, but already she and her husband had had several quarrels, but none so bad as this, for

they had never before parted in anger; and the tone of his voice, as he had uttered her name, kept ringing in her ears all morning.

A couple of hours later a sergeant named Nolan, went into his wife's tent, and said, sadly: "Poor Connors has got the cholera, and they've taken him away to the hospital. I wish you'd go and break the news to his wife. I can't do it."

Mrs. Nolan looked up at him with a startled face. "When did he take it?" she asked.

"About an hour ago," replied her husband. "He was going around with the officer of the day when he was taken ill. They put him in a dhoolie and sent him away to the hospital at once."

"Poor soul!" murmured good Mrs. Nolan, thinking of the poor wife to whom she would have to carry the bad news, as she hurried on her bonnet and shawl.

Mrs. Connors was rocking her child to sleep in her arms when Mrs. Nolan entered, and a look of disappointment passed across her face when she saw who it was. A feverish longing to see her husband and ask his forgiveness for her rash words had taken possession of her, and when she had heard the approaching footsteps, she had looked up eagerly, thinking it was he who was coming. Mrs. Nolan saw the look and interpreted it aright, and a pity for the young wife rose in her breast. "How is the baby to-day, Mrs. Connors?" she asked, taking it gently from the mother's arms, for she feared the effect of her news.

"He is a little better, I think, but very cross," was the listless reply. "I don't know what is keeping Jim," she went on uneasily, "he should have been back here an hour ago."

"God help you, poor soul," said Mrs. Nolan, under her breath, then aloud, "I have bad news for you, Mrs. Connors, dear, your husband is sick. I am afraid he has the cholera."

Mrs. Connors put up her hands to her head in a dazed sort of way that brought the tears to good natured Mrs. Nolan's eyes. "The cholera! my Jim!" she exclaimed stupidly. "Mother of mercy; you are not speaking of my Jim, Mrs. Nolan?"

"Try and bear up, there's a good soul," said Mrs. Nolan the tears meantime streaming down her own cheeks. "Please God he will be better and come back to you again."

"Come back to me," echoed Mrs. Connors, "have they taken him away without giving me one chance to see him or speak to him? But I will follow him," she cried wildly, springing to her feet. "He is my husband and my place is beside him." She would have rushed from the tent but Mrs. Nolan barred the way with the baby in her arms. "You can't go after him, my dear," she said gently but firmly. "He is miles away by this time, and even if you did make your way to the hospital you would not be allowed to see him."

"Must I sit here then with folded hands while he is dying," demanded the young passionately. "Can I do nothing for him?"

"Yes, my dear child, you can pray for him, and that will do him more good now than anything else."

"Pray for him?" repeated Mrs. Connors, wringing her hands and looking at the elder woman with dry tearless eyes that were now pitiful than any outburst of grief would have been. "I dare not pray. Do you know what I said to him before he went out this morning? I told him that I hoped I would never see his face again, and heaven has taken me at my word."

"Don't think of that now, child," urged Mrs. Nolan. "You didn't mean it I'm sure. Come now, have courage; you have your baby to look after, you know. See, it is going to cry again." She laid the child in the mother's arms, and at the touch of the soft little form her unnatural calmness gave way and she began to cry softly.

"That is better," soliloquized the experienced Mrs. Nolan. "I will run over to my tent for a few things," she continued, "and then I'll come back and stay with you for an hour or two, perhaps all night."

She bustled away and found her husband awaiting her coming. "How did he take it?" he asked. "Dreadfully bad at first. She frightened me. It seems she and Connors had a few words this morning, and she's breaking her heart about it now. I'm going back to stay awhile with her."

"That's right, Mary," said Sergeant

Nolan, "but don't forget we've got to be on the march again before daylight."

Long before daylight the news arrived that Sergeant Connors was dead, and when his wife was told she nearly went out of her mind with grief and remorse.

God-hearted Mrs. Nolan did all she could to comfort her, but was of no avail. Hour after hour the young widow paced up and down the tent wringing her hands and crying aloud, "If I had not said that; if I had not said that." She had forgotten everything but the few angry words that had escaped her lips the last time she had looked upon the face of her husband, and nothing could persuade her that his death was not heaven's punishment for her rashness.

The camp was struck at daybreak, and a few hours later saw it set up again fourteen miles away from the place where poor Jim Connors had been seized.

It seemed as though his death had broken the spell, for there were no more fresh cases of cholera, and a fortnight after the company returned to the cantonments, having been out nearly three months. For a time it seemed as though Mrs. Connors were about to follow her husband into the next world. She grew thin and pale, and a settled melancholy took possession of her. When the first numbing shock consequent upon his sudden death had passed away, and she began to go over in imagination the circumstances surrounding it, a new cause of grief presented itself.

It was probable that he had died without receiving the ministrations of a priest, and anxiety about the welfare of his soul was added to her other troubles. She spoke of this to Mrs. Nolan one day, and that kind soul tried to comfort her by saying that Father Jerome visited the cholera hospital constantly. But this did not satisfy her, though it gave her a ray of hope. "If I could only be sure that he had received the rites of the Church and that he had forgiven me, I could try to be resigned," she wailed. "But he was taken away so suddenly; so suddenly."

A day or two after this conversation, a number of convalescent cholera patients returned to barracks, amongst whom was an Englishman who had been in the hospital when Sergeant Connors died. This man immediately took his way to the widow's quarters and asked to see her.

The average British soldier is not given to sentiment, and Private Wilson felt decidedly awkward in entering upon a mission that would probably be provocative of a trying scene.

He stood up awkwardly enough when Mrs. Connors entered the room and began abruptly. "If you please mam, I was in the next bed to the sergeant when 'e was dying and 'e asked me to come and see you, if I got better, and tell you that 'e saw Father Jerome—that furrin chap from the Carth'lic chapel you know, man—and to tell you halso not to fret about *hanythink* whatsoever, and you was to kiss the baby for 'im and bring it hup to be a good man."

Having delivered himself of his message thus concisely Private Wilson relapsed into silence and embarrassment.

At first Mrs. Connors scarcely understood the purport of his words, but when their meaning dawned upon her, she forgot the presence of the soldier and everything else except that her husband had not passed unprepared into eternity and

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that he had forgiven her before he died; and she fell on her knees and cried aloud, "Oh, thank God, thank God, he did not die unprepared," and then burst into a passion of tears; whereupon Private Wilson fled to the sanctuary of his barrack-room where he might shortly afterwards have been heard expressing to a particular friend his opinion that "them there Irish is a rum blooming lot, for the sergeant's missus was as pleased when she 'eard the furriner from the Carth'lic chapel had been to see 'er 'usband as if 'ed a been the Prince of Wales 'isself." Not but what, he added reflectively, "e was good enough, not minding the cholera no more'n if it had a been the prickly 'eat."

Time and the consolation of religion, brought peace if not happiness to the widow, and her one object in life now is to obey her husband's last wishes by bringing her son up to be a good man.

EMMA C. STREET.

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Montreal, November 1891. I was suffering for three months from an obstinate cough, pricking in my throat, night sweats and a general debility, which caused me to fear consumption of the throat. I am now perfectly well, and owe my cure to Dr. Lavolette's Syrup of Turpentine. I took four small bottles of 25 cents each. FELIX SAUVAGEAU, General Contractor, No. 179 1/2 St. Antoine Street.

MONTREAL, 20th February, 1892.—J. G. Lavolette, Esq., M.D., No. 217 Commissioners street Sir,—I suffered for 27 years from a severe bronchitis and oppression which I had caught during the Franco-Prussian war. I made use in France and Canada of many important remedies, but unavailingly. I am now completely cured after having used 4 bottles of your Syrup of Turpentine. I am happy to give you this testimonial, and hope, for the good of humanity, your syrup may become known everywhere. AUGUSTE BOUVENEL, Advertising Agent for "Le National."

MONTREAL, 13th December, 1890. I, the undersigned, do certify that Dr. Lavolette's Syrup of Turpentine, which I am using for some time, is the only remedy that has given me a notable relief from "Asthma," a disease from which I have been a sufferer for many years, and which had become so very serious as to require my dispensation from occupation of any kind. I have been treated by several physicians abroad, but without the slightest result; and do here state that the progressive improvement which is daily taking place in my health by the use of this Syrup gives me entire confidence in a radical cure. SISTER OCTAVIEN, Sister of Charity of the Providence, corner of Fullum and St. Catherine Sts.

PROVIDENCE ASYLUM, corner St. Habert and St. Catherine Streets. I consider it my duty to certify that, being a sufferer from Chronic Bronchitis since over 22 years, the use of Doctor Lavolette's Syrup of Turpentine has given me a great relief. The cough has diminished and sleep has returned gradually. SISTER THOMAS CORSIKI, Sister of Charity of the Providence.

MONTREAL, December, 1891.—I was suffering, for more than a year, from an obstinate cough, an abundant expectoration of a very bad appearance, night sweats, pain in the chest, debility and a progressive wasting, which caused me to dread consumption. I took several remedies unavailingly. I am now perfectly well, to the great surprise of my friends, and have been cured by Dr. Lavolette's Syrup of Turpentine. I took 5 bottles of 50 cts. each. I can recommend this precious syrup to those who are coughing and think themselves in consumption. W. DASTOUS, No. 90 St. Antoine Street.

SOREL, 11th February, 1892.—I, the undersigned, have used Dr. Lavolette's Syrup of Turpentine for bronchitis, from which I was suffering for over one year. This syrup not only cured me of bronchitis but also of gravel and calculus in my kidneys, which had caused me intense sufferings for over 3 years and from which I was very near dying 2 years ago. I am now in perfect health; all symptoms of those diseases having completely disappeared for over three months. J. B. ROUILLARD, Inspector-General of Mines for the Province of Quebec.

MONTREAL, 18th February, 1892.—I, the undersigned, certify to my little boy, seven years old, having been cured by Dr. Lavolette's Syrup of Turpentine. Had caught "la grippe" last winter, took several remedies unavailingly. Cough most violent and very painful for us to hear. Towards month of July last, when cough was at its worst, made use of this marvelous syrup and was completely cured by two bottles. Never coughed since, and consider his lungs much strengthened by that wonderful remedy. J. A. DESROSIERS, No. 111 St. Christophe Street, (Agent of Estate-Skelly), 1598 Notre Dame Street.

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