

Lights and Shadows of A Sick Man's Life.

Many are the hymns of praise sung in favor of Altruism with a big A. But individual beneficence can do little good unless it is materialized in some permanent institution. It remains as an evanescent sentiment which never takes root in practice. Let us see how practical philanthropy is realized and effectuated by one of the noblest institutions in our midst by taking a peep at a day's workings among the sick and suffering in the Hotel Dieu Hospital. This old-established landmark in Montreal has doubtless been now had its history and method of administration written up from an exoteric point of view. But from an esoteric point of view, from the point d'appui of an insider, in order to thoroughly realize its lights and shadows, to appreciate the immense good it does among the poor and unfortunate, it is necessary to be a patient and for a brief period to live the life of the sick so well cared for and looked after by the good Sisters Hospitaliers of St. Joseph.

In the hallway of the second floor we encounter an augury of our future experiences in the Hotel Dieu. The radiant face of Mons. de la Danversiere beams out of a crayon portrait on the wall with the look of ecstatic joy evoked by the glad tidings, as runs the legend, "that he was to be allowed to found a congregation of Hospitaliers and establish a house of the Order in Montreal," while the aristocratic, ardent, religious visage of Anne de Melun, Princesse d'Epigny, Marquise de Richebourg and Foundress of the first Hotel Dieu looks out of another picture conveying at once to the new-arrival the prevailing keynote, the predominant atmosphere which pervades all around. It is Religion! Religion, and the total absence of all frills and feathers, all fuss and ostentation.

These are the two prevailing impressions which at once strike the new-comer.

A day's experience in the Hotel Dieu!

A rather staid and unpromising subject. But let us see if a good story cannot be elaborated even out of material so apparently commonplace. Arrived in the hospital and duly inspected, the new patient is given his card. He ascends to his ward, in which he is billeted, where he is duly bathed, given a clean change of underlinen, his temperature and pulse taken, and then he is put to bed.

But let us start in with his experiences on the day after his arrival. Six o'clock in the morning! The little bell rings in the ward—ting-a-ling-a-ling. The sound is diminutive, but the orders it conveys are peremptory. The curtains are rapidly drawn back on the cots of the sick and if the convalescent and non-bedridden do not profit by the monition, they receive a domiciliary visit at the bedside as a reminder. But the day has commenced long ago for the community and the working population of the hospital. For over an hour already, namely from 5 o'clock, Mass has been going on in the hospital chapel, celebrated by valetudinarian priests, some recuperating from serious illnesses, others, white-haired, old, and infirm, after a life of arduous toil, but now in snug harbor at last under the fostering care of the good Sisters. The Mass goes on from five until half-past seven, when the community Mass is said by the popular assistant chaplain, Father Tom O'Reilly, when all patients well enough to be up and around can attend the service. An easy matter. Walk a few paces through a corridor communicating with the ward, turn the handle of a door, and you are in the chapel, in an elevated gallery, or tribune, looking down on the worshippers below. Or the shutters being folded back, through an open lattice work grating at the end of the ward looking down on the church, the sick worshipper can follow what is going on below and pray at his ease, almost without leaving his cot. It is truly religion made easy!

But it is half-past six. The Sisters march slowly down the ward in solemn procession, intoning the Latin prayers of their office. Morning prayer is recited and the breakfast is then distributed. Good, solid food for those able to assimilate it. A substantial bowl of porridge brimming over with fresh milk. A delicious plate of savory American hash and a capacious bowl of tea with bread and butter ad lib. This, of

course, for the patients not on low diet. Breakfast concluded, the breakfast things cleaned up, temperatures and pulses having been taken, medicines distributed, the shutters are drawn back from the lattice-work grating looking down into the church and those who are able flock to the end of the ward to hear Mass. An hour passes away and in comes a young scholastic, a novice from the Jesuit Novitiate, to devote half an hour to spiritual reading to the sick. For half an hour, in a loud, cheerful tone, he reads a chapter from some pious book, it may be some saintly sister's revelations concerning the Passion of our Saviour, the life of some modern saint, such as Don Bosco, the founder of the Salesian Order, etc. For it is Lent and all during this penitential season some ecclesiastic is detailed specially by the Jesuit Fathers to give religious readings twice a day as well as recite the stations of the Way of the Cross.

"Come, get No. 72 ready for the clinic in the operating room." It is the white-coated attendant from the top floor summoning a surgical victim for an operation. "Vite, vite, le docteur l'attend," he vociferates in shrill French, as he rushes off again. The portable stretcher is wheeled up to the bed and the sufferer is gently laid thereon to be taken rapidly in the elevator up to the scene of the ordeal. The operating theatre is already half filled with students, all French-Canadians, of the Laval School of Medicine. Dr. Merrill, the well-known surgeon, with his aides, is already in evidence.

The stretcher is wheeled in. Perhaps it is a case of appendicitis, where the vermiform appendix, that peculiar little worm-like gut that nobody seems to know the use of, and the privation of which seems to cause no ill-consequences, has to be cut out. A simple operation, they say, but sometimes entailing serious results in the shape of peritonitis. Under the eyes of the pitying Christ, with arms outstretched on the crucifix, looking down from his bed of agony on the scene of suffering below, stands the table containing in grim array the glass jars of antiseptic lotions, the carefully steamed and sterilized implements of torture, the bistouries and scalpels, the aseptic compresses and all that is needful for the ordeal.

The operating table is wheeled up close to the lowest row of semicircular student's benches and the lecturer commences in French his explanation of the sufferer's symptoms and the various steps to be taken in the forthcoming operation. In the meantime the patient is being rapidly prepared and anesthetized for the ordeal he is about to undergo. Shaved if necessary, the region of the approaching incision is carefully washed with Castile soap, water, and brush, then sponged with ether and alcohol to get rid of the skin fats and grease, then irrigated with permanganate of potash solution to oxidize the microbes and putrefaction germs, and finally washed with an antiseptic solution of bichloride of mercury. Is he ready for the sacrifice? Not yet by any means. He has yet to be anesthetized.

At a light, elastic step is heard outside. The door of the theatre clean-shaven chin. Evidently some looking man enters, faultlessly attired in a dark Prince Albert, with white hair and white sideboards, and clean-shaven chin. Evidently some important personage, judging from the subdued applause of the students. Yes! It is himself. The great surgeon, Sir W. Hingston, presenting in his person the type and beau-ideal of what one would expect a surgeon to be. With a very prosaic, business-like air, in elegant, classical French individualized by an honest, sturdy Anglo-Saxon accent, he plunges at once in medias res. In a clear, lucid manner, with the eloquence of precision and the exhaustive erudition of his art, he gives an introductory history of the case, eliciting by skilful questions from the patient himself or from some of the attendants the necessary information to guide him.

In the meantime the preparations have been going on for anesthetizing the sufferer. The funnel-shaped inhaler is applied to the mouth and nostrils. Drop by drop the volatile ether is poured on the woollen films and as they become saturated with the pregnant, sickly-smelling spirit, the patient inhaling the vapor gradually becomes inebriated, falls

asleep, and finally sinks into a condition of complete unconsciousness. Still holding his pulse, and watching every move and every indication, with watch in hand, the assistant surgeon proclaims that the psychic moment has arrived. "Everything ready, now's the time." With the remark that some bright, glad some days seem particularly suited for operations, and generally secure a successful result, whilst dark, gloomy days seem to injuriously affect the condition of the patient and to be attended sometimes with fatal consequences, the great operator takes No. 1 instrument handed to him, bistoury or scalpel, as the case may be, and with a masterly sweep of the hand, makes the first incision. No faltering here. Coolly and calmly, as if he was cutting a joint, rapidly and firmly but with a medical care and gentleness peculiar of its kind, the surgeon digs into the groin and snips off the offending vermiform appendage whose inflammation has caused so much trouble. The entrail is rapidly sewed up, the wound dressed and in a few minutes all is over. The operation is successful, as is testified by the round of applause from the budding Aesculapians. In three weeks more the sufferer will be out of his bed, walking about once more.

And now half-past eleven has arrived. It is the hour for dinner. A good bowl of soup, some nourishing meat from the joint with vegetables and a farinaceous pudding. Such is the bill of fare with tea as a beverage. Plain, but substantial and wholesome. Prayers again quietly and reverentially intoned prelude the prandial repast. The meal is taken in semi-silence, only broken by the occasional ejaculations and pious prayers of the ministering Sisters. At the end of the repast the rosary is recited by an old blind man, an old stand-by of the hospital, who performs this function in a sympathetic manner twice daily, always terminating with a special fervent ejaculation thrice repeated to the fostering care of the Apostle of Ireland. For we are in St. Patrick's ward, the English-speaking section, and the old blind man reciting the rosary is a devout son of St. Patrick.

Then again comes the distribution of medicine and about two hours after, the earnest, boyish young novice comes in again and after making his rounds among the sick patients, seats himself in the middle of the ward and we are again treated to a chapter from some religious work, the life of some saint or a treatise on the uses and lessons to be derived from sickness and infirmity.

Occasionally the monotony of the usual sick-bed routine is varied by the tinkle, tinkle of the scoring bell. The light of wax tapers twinkles in the distance and a diminutive procession slowly winds its way down the ward. Preceded by two suppliant acolytes bearing lighted candles, arrayed in stole and surplice, with his veil enfolding the pyx containing the sacramental species, as he reverently clasps it to his breast, with another suppliant attendant reverentially extending a silken oriental canopy over his head, the hospital chaplain is solemnly bearing the holy Viaticum with all possible respect and dignity to the bedside of some poor dying man. For that is one thing that is never missed in a Catholic hospital, the ministrations of the last rites of the Catholic Church to those who die within the pale.

Curious types are to be seen among the habitues who have recourse to the kindly care of the Sisters of the Hotel Dieu. Originals many of them—"has been" better days and yet may have some dim, shadowy future before them.

Here, reposing wearied, attenuated and emaciated on his bed, lies one who in his time has won many a stalwart champion, many a doughty giant of the ring. But time, old age, hard luck, and the battle of life have been too many for him and now with all his quondam pugilistic laurels, he is down and out indeed. Then, palmed and shaken with neurasthenia, with all his nerves shattered and unstrung by his narrow cot crouches the form of a once prosperous professional man. A wreck of what he once was! Is there yet enough vitality and stamina left in him to recreate and reconstitute his manhood and vitality? The cause it boots little to tell. Hard luck, misfortune, softening of the brain acting on a sensitive organization. It may be any or all of these. What matters it? The tangible result is all that it affects the ordinary mortal to know.

And here is an interesting personage, indeed, quite a celebrity of the hospital. It is our old blind friend redolent of the Emerald Isle, a sample such as was turned out of the



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Green Island years and years ago but of a type belonging to the old school such as we find little represented in modern days. We have already heard him twice reciting the rosary for us and he enjoys the proud distinction of being the poet-laureate of the Hotel Dieu.

His poetry is free, independent, and racy of the soil, and his Muse soars triumphant, unfettered by the trammels of ordinary versification. Here is a tribute which he rendered in verse to the kindness and charity of Sister McGurty, the popular and widely-loved lady, who so ably controls the destinies of St. Patrick's ward, on the occasion of the celebration of her jubilee or fiftieth anniversary of her taking the sacred vow of a religious. There was quite a celebration in St. Patrick's ward on that occasion, the 26th of January last. A banquet was provided for the poor patients. Poetry and speeches for the guests. Our old blind representative of the ancient bards of Erin, (if only of the "come all ye" class), congratulated their beloved friend and over-faithful nurse in the following stanzas, which if homely and rugged, have a genuine ring of warmth and gratitude about them, which might be lacking in verse more classic and more ornate.

Reverend Sister and dear friends
In the midst of joy and pleasure
We celebrate a happy Jubilee
For a Sister whom we love and treasure.

Who has trod the path of charity
For over fifty years.
In relieving the sick and suffering
You oft-times wept in tears.

You've succored the blind and lame,
Helped men from every clime,
In aiding the sick and invalid
You've devoted all your time.
You've watched with tender care
Wiped the sore and aching brow
Inflamed by an ardent charity
That constitutes a sacred vow.

On the feast of the Epiphany,
Twelfth Night, there was another celebration, a high old time, with the added presence of some of the best friends and patronesses of the hospital.

Mrs. Bergeron was there, one of the best known and most charitable Catholic ladies in Montreal, and one of the greatest benefactresses of the poor Catholic Irish in the city, as the sick patients of that nationality in Sister McGurty's ward have good reason to know.

Our blind poet-laureate was again this day to the fore. He was solemnly, with all pomp and ceremony, crowned king of the feast, and down from St. Brigid's Catholic Irish ward for females comes a worthy old soul of the name of Phillips to bear him company as his royal consort.

St. Patrick's ward resounded with cheers as the blind bard recited the following poetic effusion as a greeting and grateful tribute to their kindly benefactress:

Here's to Mrs. Bergeron
A lady good and true
Who donates liberally
To our Hotel Dieu,
Who takes an active part
In maintaining a Christian cause.
Such acts are meritorious—
They're worthy of our applause.

But the lady was not left alone in the eulogistic rhapsody. Her husband, Hon. Mr. Bergeron, was also commemorated in laudatory verse. Live a trumpet-call to his political partisans and followers rings out the poet's invitation to rally under his banner—witness the following verse:

Arise, arise, ye Bergerites
The battle now begins
Bergeron is on the warpath
With an army of ancient friends,
We must give a gigantic victory
As in the days of yore.

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And now the shades of evening commence to fall. It is nearing 5 o'clock. The day is almost done. The attendants are setting the supper-things, and presently round they come with the evening repast. "Full and plenty" is, as usual, the motto. To the sympathetic accompaniment of prayers the meal proceeds. After supper comes the recital of the Rosary again, and then evening prayers. Then the dresser takes the evening temperatures, utilizing, as well as he can, with judicious economy, the sterilized clinical thermometers among the thirty or more bedridden patients.

And so the day closes. Eight o'clock has come. The Angelus rings. The Sister recites the prayer. The curtains of the snow-white cots are drawn for the night. The sick are comfortably tucked to sleep. Larkness descends upon many a bed of quiet suffering and poignant pain and agony patiently endured and borne, for the sufferers know that they are in the hands of true, genuine friends and that all that science, religion, and the best of good treatment can afford will be done for their physical and mental ills, their bodily and spiritual needs. Friend of the poor and needy, they know how well a Sister of Charity in the fulfillment of her mission and her vows realizes and exemplifies the words of Longfellow in that truly Catholic poem "Evangeline."

"Thither by night and by day came the Sister of Mercy. The dying looked up into her face and thought indeed to behold there Beams of celestial light encircle her forehead with splendor. Such as the artist paints on the brows of saints or apostles, Or such as shines by night o'er cities seen at a distance. Unto their eyes it seemed the lamps of the city celestial, Into whose shining gates are long their spirits will enter.

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(Concluded.)

"I have to hurry on to C. portant business," he said. have to stay three weeks. come back, Helen, I hope you ready to set our wedding-d She turned on him a laugh "How will Christmas we she said. "Would that be short time, or a short long you, Raymond?" "Riddle me no riddles," he ed, and then his gaze wand the lovely face, half earn quizzical, before him, to an farded miniature, that lay f on a small table near h "What is this?" he said. sweet face, and how like you surely it must be you mother."

"Yes," said the young girl, to his side. "It is my father, Charlotte von Haas. M and aunt have both seen the you speak of, Raymond. "Wonderful!" he answered then he arose and made He low, his laughing blue eyes pride in her beauty. "I must congratulate you said. "No doubt Madame v was a noted court beauty, by the Emperor, and the toast the great man."

"As I would be, I suppose, ed in Germany," answered H murely; and then she came him, her dark eyes full of ap sweetness. "I have been talking to m and aunt, Raymond," she said—well—if you wish, they thin might be married before the is over."

It was half an hour instead minutes when Raymond mounted his horse and com his ride northward. The boy, more wide-awake than n his race, noticed his master's looks as he waved good-bye to dance. "We will be married at the of Our Lady of Guadalupe," the Raymond, "with dear Padre F say our nuptial Mass. How my foster-mothers will be. The love Helen."

Pure and untried was the boy as he rode on through purple hills. Simple was his but in his simplicity, and the sense of evil in his past life, strength. Right and wrong w pable of only one interpretation. Raymond.

Half a mile further on his suddenly shied violently, and he not been a good horseman, he have been unseated. As it w barely saved himself from going the animal's head; at the same a groan reached his ears. Recover himself almost instantly, he h dismounted and looked around ing in the shadow of a rock, the trail he was following th a canyon, Raymond saw the o of a man's figure. The Mexican rode up, and also hastily dism ed. Together they reached the side, and saw that he seem some way to be mortally hurt. place where they stood was nee river. Raymond turned to the. "Run quickly, Pedro," he "Bring some water."

The boy was gone like a flash kneeling down Raymond placed coat under the man's head. S dert was the face with blood dirt that recognition would been impossible; but the you man saw that the elder was unde ed a stranger and a gentleman age seemed to be about fifty.

A second later and Pedro was with water. Carefully Rayg bathed the unconscious man's and then with the aid of the Mex began gently moving his limbs try and find out where he was hurt. The movement, com with the refreshing cold water, ed to revive the unconscious man, groaned and presently opened eyes.

"Main Roslein roth," he said them in English; "Surely it is my Rose, 'nicht wahr?'" "His mind is wandering," th Raymond, whose own mind was n the rapidly. Something must done quickly, for the wound ed seemed to have relapsed into consciousness again. For a mon the younger man hesitated, then decision was made. It was half a mile back to W—, and s miles to C—, the nearest town n ward. His business, such as it v must wait.