

A STRANGE STORY.

Condensed from the Month.

Some fifteen or twenty years ago I was working as a trained nurse in one of our large hospitals, not long before I left a strange thing happened to me; a thing which I have never forgotten so great was the impression it made on my mind. I had no clue to its meaning until later on when I was received into the Catholic Church and instructed in her doctrine, though a complete explanation I must not have on this side the grave. As I have said I was not a Catholic but had always done all I could to assist those patients whom I knew of that faith. Father James and I were very good friends and though I never said much I know the difference between his ministrations and those of the parsons around the place. But for the story.

Late one evening a poor fellow was brought in who had fallen from some scaffolding. It was a fearful case; his head and face were badly cut and he was suffering from internal injuries. The poor fellow was not expected to live through the night. It was not my turn at watching but the doctor said in his grave, courteous way "Sister"—we were always called Sister—"Sister I fear I must ask you to take this case." I made no difficulty and he went away promising that he would call in the morning though he added "I do not expect to find him alive."

My patient was an oldish man and to judge from appearances was in comfortable circumstances, but there was a restless look in his eyes distressing to behold as he turned them restlessly around the room as if looking for something. He did not speak and presently his eyelids drooped in a way that was sad to see.

It was seven o'clock before all the arrangements were finished and the day nurses had gone to bed and I was alone with my patient. There was silence. I am neither nervous nor imaginative and at the present moment was too much absorbed in thought to have time for fancies; but there was little to do; the poor fellow was fast getting beyond human help. He was restless and muttered a good deal but I could catch no coherent words, yet I had a strong conviction that he needed something but either could not or would not say what it was. At times he would open those dark eyes and gaze upon me with a sad questioning expression that made me thoroughly unhappy. I suppose had I known more about the sacraments I should have guessed what was the matter, but I did not know and said nothing and seemed not to notice. Thus the night wore on; the sick man was growing weaker but was quiet and I took the opportunity to get a cup of tea. I aroused a patient of the next bed, whom I knew to be convalescent, that my patient might not be unwatched during my absence.

When I reached my little sanctum I sat by the fire and made and drank my tea. I did not feel lonesome but I thought of the poor fellow and wished I could do something to ease him. Suddenly there came the sound of footsteps so distinct that I thought Brown was hurrying to fetch me, and I ran to the door. No one was there, but no sooner had I sat down than there came the same sounds again. This time I could not be mistaken it was the regular beat of a man's foot in the adjoining chamber which was the operating room. I was going to open the door and tell whoever was there to stop all the tramping when I remembered that the doctors had barred the entrance on the previous evening so no one could enter in that way. The only other means of entering was through the big ward and I was certain no one had passed since I began my watch. Who could it be? For one instant I lost my self control and

instead of opening the door I gently turned the key.

I listened and still the footstep went on steadily tramping up and down. There was no sound save the regular beat of a man's foot upon the uncarpeted floor. I could bear it no longer and went and called my fellow watcher. "Do you hear the footsteps?" I asked as he entered my room. He listened a moment shook his head and smiled.

"No Sister I hear nothing but if you wish I will go in and look."

The man entered and remained outside, my heart beating wildly for the steps were going back and forth rapidly as ever. In a moment or two he came out looking grave and queer. "I can't see anyone," he said, "there is someone walking about but there ain't no one anyhow." He locked the door remarking "the party is safe now," and with a chuckle departed. Evidently Joe did not believe in ghosts.

I prepared to return to the ward. The steps seemed to have ceased and all was still. I had taken but a couple of paces along the corridor before I heard those ghostly steps once more close behind me in the passage. I turned so sharply that my candle was extinguished and I was in darkness. The steps were so close that had a body belonged to them it must have knocked against me. There was nothing: as I stood the footsteps ceased, and I was conscious of a spiritual presence around me. What it was I know not nor can I describe how the sense of that presence was conveyed to me. It was so subtle and so short lived that it was in a moment as if it had never been. And yet I am certain that I was in communication with a spirit—whether man or angel. I went and sat down by the bed and resumed my watch. My patient was quiet, only moving his lips as if talking and every now and then he opened his eyes and gazed around with that queer look. I had begun to forget the footsteps when they suddenly began at the foot of the sick man's bed. I tried not to listen and not to think of the strange monotonous sound.

An hour passed and the dying man began to grow restless. I was obliged to go downstairs to the dispensary for a soothing draught. I shall never forget the going down those silent stone stairs whilst at every step I took was the sound of a man's footstep just two stairs behind me. I tried to think it was only the echo of my own though I knew it was the heavy sound of a man's foot upon the uncovered step. The tramp of that invisible foot made but one sound—there was no echo—whilst my lighter footfall was repeated in the hall.

I soon found the bottle and flew back and was glad to be in the ward once more. The thought now flashed across my mind, that perhaps, some circumstance of my patient's past history had given him an invisible friend or enemy who came to fulfil a mission or perchance of vengeance at his dying hour. Who was he? I raised my eyes to the card at the head of the bed, and was struck with remorse for not having looked at it before. The poor man was a Roman Catholic and here was at death's door and perhaps in sore need of a priest. I had heard about the sacraments and had often seen the effects of confession on some poor sinner. I feared it was now too late but I bent over him and asked in a low voice "Would you like a priest?"

To my dying day I shall remember the look he gave me, "O Sister! Can I? May I? O if you can get me one quickly I cannot die without."

"Of course you may," I answered, "but if I had only known before! Why did you not tell me?"

"I thought it was forbidden," he whispered. "But bring him soon, I cannot die."

I sat down, hastily scribbled a note to Father James, ran down stairs and

hurried off the porter to the priest. During this time the steps had not ceased, but sounded even louder and quicker almost with a touch of impatience in their tread as if to say, "The time is short, make haste, the time is short."

In a few minutes I heard the welcome sound of the porter's key and Father James stood before me. The quiet gravity and dignity of his mien told me that he had brought the Sacrament of his Church to the dying man. No time was wasted in words. We ascended the stairs accompanied by the footsteps, but just as the priest passed through the door of the ward they stopped. The sudden cessation of the strange monotonous sound struck a chill to my heart and the unexpected silence made me giddy. But the scene before me occupied my attention. I did not hear the words that passed, but I saw the palid face flush as the priest drew near and the two trembling hands go out in application. The scene overcame me and I knelt down and hid my face and cried; There is a strange peace and solemnity about the ministrations of the priest at a death-bed which, even in my Protestant days always touched and awed me.

After the anointing Father James prepared to administer the Holy Communion; I heard the solemn words *Ecc Agnus Dei* and bowed my head, but at the whispered thrice repeated *Domine, non sum dignus* I ventured to look up. I saw a wonderful sight. The poor man's face was changed; the haggard look gone; the troubled gaze had given place to an expression of joy. Tears were running down his cheeks and his hands now deep with the dew of death were crossed upon his breast and clasped a crucifix. It was a scene never to be forgotten and from that moment I was a Catholic at heart.

Father James put away his things and I went down to the door with him. He looked at me anxiously. "Something has upset you, sister, has it not?" I took courage and told him all about those mysterious steps that had haunted me all night and ceased when he came in. He stood silent until I had finished, then said, "Those steps will trouble you no more. God bless you, you have done a good work this night." He spoke truly. I never heard those steps again, and when an hour later I reverently laid out the body of my unknown patient and saw the look of peace and happiness on his features, I felt that I had indeed done a good deed, and that God in His mercy would perhaps in return remember me at the hour of my death.

Look to the Bed.

The components of a good bed are considered by Dr. E. G. Wood in the healthy home. In conclusion he says: "The main point nowadays is the covering. There is a strong temptation to use a quilted cotton comfortable, costing a dollar, in preference to a pair of blankets costing five times as much, yet the blankets are far cleaner, warmer (for the same weight) and better from a health standpoint in every way. It is needless to add that the good housewife will see to it that bedding and clothes have a daily airing sufficient to abolish entirely the stale, unpleasant odor which hangs around a bed and indicates the presence of an indefinite amount of ancient effluvia. Clean sheets and sunshine work wonders with beds. If you are compelled to use a modern folding bed, be sure it has ample spaces for ventilation, and that it is never put up in the morning until sun and air have worked their miracle of cleansing."

Scraped with a Rasp.

Srs.—I had such a severe cough that my throat felt as if scraped with a rasp. On taking Dr. Wood's Norway Pine Syrup I found the first dose gave relief, and the second bottle completely cured me.

MISS A. A. DOWNEY, Manotick, Ont.

Feldkirch Bells.

Zealously and victoriously the armies of the great Napoleon were sweeping over Europe. No fort was strong enough to resist them, no number of men large enough to defend a city at that time when the French battered at its walls.

On the frontiers of Austria was a little town called Feldkirch. It had no more than 3,000 or 4,000 people, mostly God fearing men. The great Napoleon found Feldkirch on his way as he advanced and gave an order to one of his generals to take it, just as a housewife would order a servant to kill a fowl for dinner. The general selected was Massena, and one beautiful Easter morning as the people arose to go to the first mass of the festival they saw General Massena's forces, numbering 18,000 men, encamped on the heights above the town. The sun as it rose shone on the long files of French muskets—a sad though glittering sight to the people, who had been thinking only of their risen Lord.

Naturally there was the greatest consternation. No one knew the best course to pursue, so a hurried meeting of the town council was held. One thing all were agreed upon—that it was useless to oppose the overwhelming numbers of the enemy. Then some one arose and suggested that a suitable person be sent to the French camp with a flag of truce and the keys of the town, asking for some degree of mercy—that at least the women, children and old men might be spared, and a general sack, the awful accompaniment of war, averted.

At this juncture an old and reverend priest arose, and all listened with close attention, for his counsels had always been loving and wise. "My children," he said, "this is Easter day. Cannot God, who arose from the dead, protect us in our distress? Shall our first act in this calamity be to forsake him? What are we against that vast number awaiting the order to attack us? Let us go to the church as usual and trust in God for the rest."

At those brave and earnest words hope sprang anew in the breasts of the faithful, and the various sextons were ordered to ring all the bells of the town as joyfully as possible. Troops of people thronged the streets and entered the churches, and one would not have known except for that menacing host upon the hill that anything had interfered with the happiness of those who were rejoicing in the resurrection.

And so the joy bells, rang and rang and rang, and the French hearing them took word to their general that they were ringing because of the arrival of re-enforcements; and that the place had been relieved in the night by a large portion of the Austrian army. The general, believing this, ordered his troops to retreat at once.

Thus while the bells of Feldkirch rang the French army stole away, and the people fell again upon their knees and gave thanks to God for their deliverance.—*Catholic Review*.

Ah! there is one devotion I will mention. It is to have more confidence in our Blessed Mother's prayers. More undoubted trust, more bold position, more real faith in her. There would be more love for Mary if there were more faith in Mary. She has been in the secret of all the good things that have happened to us in life. She is ever mindful of that second maternity which dates from Calvary, and how we lost her in the travail of her dolours, a price which has no fellow, except the Sacrifice of her Son, our Brother, and Our God.—*Father Faber*.

INFLAMMATORY RHEUMATISM.—Mr. S. Ackerman, commercial traveler, Belleville, writes: "Some years ago I used Dr. THOMAS' ELECTRIC OIL for inflammatory rheumatism, and three bottles effected a complete cure. I was the whole of one summer unable to move without crutches, and every movement caused excruciating pains. I am now out on the road and exposed to all kinds of weather, but have never been troubled with rheumatism since. I, however, keep a bottle of Dr. THOMAS' OIL on hand, and I always recommend it to others, as it did so much for me."