

CURIOUS CASES FROM A DOCTOR'S DIARY

Narratives of Certain Peculiar Episodes in the Practice of a Famous Physician-Surgeon

By L. T. MEADE and DOCTOR CLIFFORD HALIFAX

THE WRONG PRESCRIPTION

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I AM generally far too busy to leave New York during the Christmas season, but one December comes vividly before my memory, when, feeling the need of change and a partial rest, I was induced to spend a week with my friends, the Onslows, at their country home in the pretty little village of Minden, some 60 miles from the metropolis.

Among the guests in the house was a bright young fellow by the name of Oliver, and two girls, one of 18, the other a child of ten; and I was not long installed in my new quarters before I learned that Oliver and Frances Wilton were engaged to be married. It struck me from the beginning that the bride-to-be was of rather a cold and unemotional nature, and presented a strong contrast to her little sister, Rosamond, who was a perfect whirlwind of impetuosity, high spirits, laughter and noise.

On the morning of my third day at Minden I was strolling through the shrubberies after breakfast in company with my host, Jack Onslow, and Capt. Oliver, when little Rosamond Wilton rushed up to us.

"Jim," she exclaimed, addressing Oliver, "Frances wants you to do something for her. She wants you to go to the village druggist and take this note with you. He will give you some medicine that you are to bring back. Please go at once, Jim."

"All right, Rosamond," replied Oliver, accepting the note. Then as the child ran away he turned to me. "Perhaps you would like to accompany me?" he suggested.

"With pleasure," I returned; "I should like to walk just now."

Onslow preferred to remain and discuss his cigar in the garden, so Oliver and I started off to the village. On reaching the drug store I waited outside while Oliver went in to execute his commission. In a few moments he rejoined me.

"Look here, Dr. Halifax," he said, "I wish you would come in and speak to this stupid druggist. He refuses to give me the medicine which Miss Wilton has written for. He says he cannot supply it without a prescription. As you are a physician, perhaps you can manage the matter."

I entered the store immediately and went up to the druggist. He was holding Miss Wilton's open letter in his hand.

"This gentleman is a doctor," said Oliver. "He'll make it all right."

"Perhaps the doctor will write a prescription," said the druggist.

"Who is Collins?"

"A nurse. She was with Frances once when she was ill. And now she always sends for her if she feels anything the matter with her."

"Well," said Oliver, decidedly, "Collins isn't here now, and Dr. Halifax must see Frances. Take him to her at once, Rosamond."

"She is very ill," said in reply to the anxious inquiry of my hostesses. "Please stay with her, Mildred, while I fetch my bag of drugs and instruments."

I rushed away, fetched a bottle of morphia and a hypodermic syringe, and quickly injected under the skin of the girl's arm a dose which contained one grain of morphia. The relief was almost instantaneous. Miss Wilton opened her eyes, gave a sigh of intense pleasure, and presently sat up. As she did so I motioned to Mildred to leave the room. Then I addressed my patient.

"I may as well state frankly," I said, "that when I came into the room just now your condition filled me with alarm. You were terribly weak, your respiration was hurried, your pulse weak. You had symptoms also of spinal exhaustion. I came to tell you that Capt. Oliver had failed to get the medicine you wanted, because you did not send a prescription. Druggists are forbidden by law to supply certain poisonous drugs without written instructions from a medical man."

"Did the—druggist show you or Jim my letter?" she stammered.

"No," the druggist was faithful to the trust you reposed in him."

"Perhaps," I suggested, watching her narrowly, "I could write you a prescription like the one you lost."

"She glanced at me eagerly. Then her eyes fell.

"No," she faltered. "My medicine is—a sort of quack medicine, and is the only thing that helps me. I want to telegraph to New York for a nurse named Collins who has often been of use to me."

"I said, soothingly. 'I am a doctor. Take me to her at once.'

"The truth is startling and painful," I said, gravely. "Miss Wilton is a confirmed morphia-maniac."

"He turned deadly pale and caught at the window-ledge for support. 'I suspect the nurse,' I continued. 'As soon as she arrives I will interview her and tax her with what I feel is the truth. Meanwhile I shall consider Miss Wilton my patient. Your part is to look cheerful and pretend you know nothing.'

Oliver wrung my hand in silence, and turned his face away. I saw that he was struggling to keep back the tears, and left him.

At six o'clock that evening Collins arrived. We held a conference before she was admitted to Miss Wilton's presence.

"I wish to inform you," I began, "that I have found out what ails Miss Wilton. She is a confirmed morphia-maniac."

The woman colored for an instant, but recovered herself quickly. "Ah!" she said, "I knew that. I have often

begged her not to get under the influence of the drug."

"Indeed!" I responded, dryly. "Well, Miss Wilton is rapidly approaching the phase of direct poisoning, and if the drug is freely administered now, she will undoubtedly die. Therefore, I order you, as her medical man, on no account whatever to inject morphia. I will give it her myself when necessary. If you have any morphia with you now, you must give it up to me, as I am taking no chances."

She glanced at me half defiantly, and then opening her hand-bag gave me a small bottle containing some of the dangerous fluid. "That's all I have with me," she said sullenly.

I had administered my first dose of morphia to Miss Wilton at noon. As I expected, she sent for me to ask for another injection shortly before the nurse arrived. If Collins really had no more morphia in her possession, my services would probably be required again between ten and eleven that night.

A large party of friends were coming to dine with the Onslows that evening. The dinner was to be followed by a dance, to which many young people of the neighborhood were invited. Little Rosamond had begged to be allowed to sit up for the dance, and her request was granted. I was standing near one of the doorways watching the dancers swing to and fro. I was feeling very uneasy at not being summoned to Miss Wilton, for the hour was long past when she ought to request a fresh dose of her stimulant, when I was attracted by a look of sur-

prise on Rosamond's bright face. I turned in the direction of her glance, and saw, to my amazement, Frances, beautifully dressed, advancing into the room. I went up to her at once, and she greeted me with a defiant smile. "I have quite recovered, Dr. Halifax," she said, coldly. "I told you all I needed was Collins and my quack medicine to restore me." She passed on without waiting for a reply. She looked brilliant, and was undoubtedly the most beautiful girl in the room. Her fine dark eyes, usually so dull, were now bright and sparkling. I knew that she must be under the influence of a most powerful dose of the poison. Leaving the ballroom, I summoned a servant and requested that Nurse Collins be sent to me. Much to my amazement the maid informed me that the nurse had left the house an hour ago in a carriage ordered for her by Miss Wilton.

Next day I was greeted with an extraordinary piece of information. Frances Wilton and her sister had left Minden by an early train. Mildred put a small note into my hand. "Read it," she said, "and try and solve the mystery if you can."

The note was from Rosamond, a childish production, and very short. It ran as follows: "Dear Dr. Halifax: I'm awfully unhappy, so I must just send you this letter. Frances has quarreled with Collins, who won't do as she wants. We are both going away, and no one is to know where we

the evening of the second day I was sitting in my study, thinking over the Wilton affair, and feeling rather uneasy. My meditations were broken by a ring at the hall door, and the next moment my servant told me that a woman was waiting to see me, who refused to give her name, but insisted that her errand was one of life or death. On entering the consulting room I was amazed to find myself face to face with the missing nurse.

"I've come to confess," she cried in broken tones. "Oh, Dr. Halifax, go to Miss Wilton at once, and perhaps you can save her! I gave her the wrong prescription—I only found out my mistake an hour ago."

"I was called in to nurse Miss Wilton six months ago," she said, feverishly. "She was suffering very much at the time from the effects of a recent illness. Her nerves were disordered, she was sleepless, and she used to undergo agonies of pain from neuralgia. Dr. Johnson was attending her, and prescribed morphia, which I was to inject in the usual way with a hypodermic syringe. By and by the pain disappeared, and Dr. Johnson ordered me to cease administering the morphia. But Miss Wilton had acquired a liking for the drug, could not sleep without it, and begged me hard to repeat the doses, offering to pay me well. I was in debt and needed money badly, so I repeated the morphia doses, and in a very short time I had her in my power. She could not live without

the drug, and was willing to pay me anything to obtain it. She had plenty of money, and possessed many valuable jewels. One by one these jewels were handed over to me in exchange for morphia. When she sent for me three days ago her supply had unexpectedly run out. I would have remained with her, but you frightened me with regard to her state. If it were known that I had played thus with the life of a patient I would have been ruined. So I injected as large a dose of morphia as I could with safety into my patient's arm, and then told her I must leave her. Before going I gave her a supply of morphia, enough to last her for a day. I also gave her, or thought I did, the prescription which Dr. Johnson had given me for her six months ago. But tonight I made an awful discovery. When looking through some prescriptions, I found that I had not given Miss Wilton the one which called for morphia. On the contrary, I had given her another prescription, which in her case would probably lead to fatal results. It was for strychnine. Dr. Halifax, strychnine in a form for hypodermic injection. Now you know the worst, doctor. Go to Miss Wilton and try to save her."

"Look here," I said, harshly; "I don't know what kind of a game you are playing, but I'm certain you are aware that Miss Wilton is in hiding. She left Minden the morning after you did and we have been hunting for her ever since."

"As heaven is my judge," she almost shrieked, "I know nothing of her

whereabouts, doctor. I supposed that she was still in Minden, and—"

Her protest was cut short by the sudden opening of the door, and little Rosamond Wilton rushed into the room. "Come with me at once, Dr. Halifax," she cried. "Frances sent me for you. She's nearly dead—do come and save her! We have been stopping at a big hotel down town, and she wouldn't let me tell you until today; but now she wants you so bad."

I turned to the wretched woman who had been the cause of all the trouble and bade her leave the house and never show her face in it again. Then I hastened to obey the summons of my unfortunate patient. When last I saw Miss Wilton she was brilliant in her ball-dress. Now she was in so complete a state of collapse that I could scarcely have recognized her as the same girl. To my relief she opened her eyes and gave a start of pleasure when she saw me.

"You can save me," she said, weakly; "you know what is the matter."

"You are a morphia-maniac," I said. "Have you been taking much of the drug since you left Minden?"

"Yes, a good deal. I had a prescription. It was made up, and I injected the quantity which always gave me relief. Dr. Halifax, an awful thing has happened; the morphia no longer relieves me; it fills me with horror, with sickness and cramp. I am in agony and dare not take any more. Each dose makes me worse." She gripped her hands to her sides and writhed as she spoke.

I walked to the table, hoping to find the prescription, but it was not there. Miss Wilton was past speaking now I went to the door of the bedroom and called Rosamond.

"I want the prescription," I said. "Of your sister's last medicine. You went out to have it made up, did you not?"

"I did; here it is. Is Frances very ill?"

"She is. How often has she injected this medicine?"

"Oh, several times last night, but not to-day. She says it makes her worse."

I went back to the room and studied the prescription. It was a prescription for strychnine, certainly, but it could not have been the one which Nurse Collins imagined she had given Miss Wilton. The doses ordered to be injected were too small to cause death, although they would doubtless, if frequently administered, give rise to painful sensations. I thought hard for a moment and then a sudden idea occurred to me. I went back to my patient and carefully noted every symptom. She had been now quite 24 hours without morphia; she had therefore, arrived at the height of that terrible time when the abstinence storm is worst. The respiration ought to be terribly hurried; the pulse at most past counting. Miss Wilton was ill and in frightful suffering; she was also in a state of extreme prostration, but her pulse was fairly steady, and was not beating more than a hundred and twenty times to the minute. When I had examined her at Minden two days ago, after a very much shorter period of abstinence, her pulse had beat a hundred and fifty times to the minute. The idea, therefore, which occurred to me was this: Nurse Collins, without intending it, had actually found a cure for my patient! If I went on administering the strychnine in very small quantities, it would undoubtedly act as a tonic, ward off the extreme weakness of the heart which had to be dreaded, and, in short, enable Miss Wilton to weather the awful abstinence storm. I sent at once for a respectable nurse in whom I had perfect confidence, installed her in Miss Wilton's room, and told her how I meant to treat the case.

"I intend to continue the strychnine," I said, "and I wish the patient to be under the impression that she is still having morphia injections."

I then went out and telegraphed to Oliver and Onslow, and finally returned to spend the night with my patient. I shall never forget the fortnight which followed. The first five days were the worst, then gradually and slowly there came longer and longer intervals of comparative relief, until at last there arrived an hour when I had the pleasure of seeing Miss Wilton fall into a long and perfectly natural sleep. When she awoke, refreshed and calm, and with an altogether new look on her face, I was standing at her bedside.

"Oh, I am better," she said, with a sigh. "I have had a heavenly sleep. How thankful I am that the morphia is beginning to take effect again."

"How do you know that morphia produced that sleep?" I asked.

"How can I doubt it?" she replied. "Nurse injected some into my arm just before I dropped off asleep."

"You are wonderfully better," I said, sitting down beside her. "You will soon be perfectly well."

"Yes," she said, sadly. "I am better; but what is the use of holding out hope to me? I am the slave of morphia; I cannot live without it."

"Now, listen to me," I said; "I have some very good news for you. You believe the refreshing sleep you have just had was due to the injection of morphia. It was nothing of the kind. The nurse merely injected water with a very little strychnine. You may rejoice, for you have quite conquered that miserable habit. That refreshing sleep you have had proves you to be not only convalescent, but, in short, cured."

"May we come in?" said a cheerful voice at the door.

"Yes, certainly," I answered, and Mrs. Onslow and Oliver entered the room. I saw Frances Wilton sit up and look rapturously at her lover, her bright eyes radiant with the twin lights of love and hope.

GETS DEATH PENALTY

JURY IN DAVIS CASE BRINGS IN ITS VERDICT.

HAPPENINGS OVER THE STATE

What is Going on Here and There

That is of Interest to the Readers Throughout Nebraska and Vicinity.

Ainsworth, Neb.—The jury in the Davis murder case after deliberating ten hours forty minutes Tuesday brought in a verdict of murder in the first degree and imposed the death penalty. Owing to the fact that it was a holiday the court could not set the date of execution nor the attorney for the defendant file a motion for a new trial, but he did ask for a day or two in which to arrange his affairs, and the court set February 25 as the time for hearing of motion.

Walter Effenburg, alias, George Wilson, convicted of the crime, received the verdict without a quiver and when taken back to his cell in the county jail took up the work of writing letters to relatives without the loss of a moment's time.

Monday was given over to the arguments of the attorneys of both sides and it was found necessary to hold a night session of the court in order to finish. Judge Harrington concluded his charge to the jury and placed the case in his hands at 8:20 p. m. and at 7 o'clock the jury announced to the bailiff that a verdict had been reached and the judge and other officers of the court were hastily summoned and despite the early hour and the intense cold, there were present in the court room when the verdict was read about 100 people, with a number of women among them.

The crime of which Wilson was convicted was an atrocious one. J. Davis, Jr., who conducted a pool hall, on the night of December 27, last, closed his business at 11 o'clock and started home. He was shot while passing through an alley near his home, the bullet passing almost through his head. His pockets were robbed of about \$225. The body was then dragged to a barn nearby, where Davis must have partially revived. The murderer then took some sharp instrument and inflicted a number of serious wounds about the head. Davis lived but an hour or two and never regained consciousness. Wilson was suspected and placed under arrest and when searched about \$225 was found on his person.

Demented Man Shoots Brother. Burwell, Neb.—Salem Essy, the demented man that attempted to murder his two brothers in the north part of the county is now in jail. He was in charge of a brother and broke away and went to a neighbor's house and stole a gun. He then returned and shot one brother twice at a distance of a few rods and then assaulted the other brother and would have choked him to death but for the arrival of neighbors, who found it necessary to beat himself into insensibility to subdue him. Thomas Essy, the man that was shot, is resting easy and the doctors report that he will recover. Salem Essy will be sent to the asylum.

Some few weeks ago Salem Essy was before the insanity board, but the commissioners did not find him serious enough, as they thought, to send to the asylum and his brother and sister agreed to care for him.

Aged Man Is Missing. Fremont, Neb.—Search is in progress for Gilbert Fay, an eccentric old man, who has been living in a hotel. Fay has not been seen for about a week. He left the home of his son and established a home for himself in a little house in Fremont for a long period. He is past eighty years old and well known, particularly on account of his long flowing hair. He has not worn a hat for ten years.

To Join Municipal League. Kearney, Neb.—At the city council meeting Wednesday night a communication was read from the secretary of the Nebraska league of municipalities requesting the city of Kearney to join the same. After consideration the city clerk was instructed to forward to the secretary the necessary fee and Kearney will take her place among the cities of the state.

Burlington Man Badly Burned. Sutton, Neb.—Harry Reger, Burlington round house boss, was about to fill an oil tank for use about the cars when the gas ignited severely burning his face and neck. He is receiving treatment of a local physician who gives encouragement; that the injury will not be serious, although now very painful.

Dunbar, Neb.—Following the reception here Monday tendered to Dunbar and its citizens by the Dunbar state bank in its new modern quarters, the many friends of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Murray gathered at their home in the evening to surprise them on their sixteenth wedding anniversary. It was a delightful affair. Mr. Murray is one of the best known bankers in southeastern Nebraska, having come to Dunbar when a mere boy from Scotland, and by his own efforts has attained great success. He has now given Dunbar one of the most modern banking institutions in the state.

when I compared myself in the latest afternoon extras and in the Sunday papers. In fact, I hoped in time to be able to live myself down.

"Evidently that was not to be my fate, as I shortly found out. The other day I felt moved to take an acquaintance to luncheon, and sought a rathskeller down town here of which I had often heard. Coming forward to show us a table the oberkellner greeted me with the salutation: 'Good morning, Mr. —,' calling me by name.

"Of course I took it like a little man, for it did me no harm in the eyes of my acquaintance to be known in such a place; but the head waiter had me guessing. Like all western men I had heard of the cordial commercialism of the men who suddenly know you on the street and sell you things, gold bricks and the like sort of wares, but this was my first experience in that line.

"I was not going to buy, but I was curious to find out the game. It was just the same after luncheon

was over, the oberkellner spoke to us as we passed him going out, once more called me by name, hoped that the service had been satisfactory, and trusted that they might see me soon again.

"He did. The very next day I went back, insistent to be shown. It was simple enough, the oberkellner read the papers, pictures and all, and he had memorized my face on the off chance, and had made good. That struck me as a good piece of business."—New York Sun.

Better Side of Human Nature.

Most men find out very little about the better side of human nature till they fall ill and need help. Then it is that their real friends come to their relief. Money, the hardest of commodities to get, is never spent more freely than in assisting friends who are in trouble.

When Their Nerve Falls.

Eminent explorers who have faced all the dangers in the world lose their courage before an audience of ladies.