

## A Morning in an Out-patient Ward of a Children's Hospital.

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THE Children's Hospital in Great Ormond Street is the most prominent and oldest established of all the London institutions for the treatment of young patients. Beginning as a small dispensary, it has gradually added to its funds and increased its accommodation until the present time, when it is a building of importance, with capacity for something under two hundred beds, and large out-patient departments. A sketch of a morning spent in one of the out-patient offices may be of interest as it affords opportunity for studying diminutive human nature in its many phases.

We pass through a large waiting-room filled with mothers, aunts, and neighbours who are waiting their turn to present their respective small charges to the attending doctors. All ages of childhood are represented, some of the women being accompanied by several members of their families, it being a matter of observation that little Tommy being sick, mother takes the opportunity, while bringing him for treatment, to get medical advice for little Dick and Harry, even if chilblains alone form the ground of the latter's complaint. Why not make the most of the chance and get learned opinion as to the best mode of dealing with the malady? So the youngsters get an unwontedly vigorous ablution with soap and water until their faces shine with a satiny polish, while best suits, boots, and stockings are donned in order to fit them for the searching investigation about to be made. They are instructed to take off their hats, place their hands behind their backs as if repeating a spelling lesson, and to put out their tongues to the farthest possible limit. This last instruction is sometimes so strictly obeyed that the moment the urchin enters the awful presence out goes his tongue, and remains the most prominent feature of his countenance until he is dismissed. It is amusing to watch his endeavours during the ordeal. Every energy is strained to keep the lingual tip a fixed point, by no means an easy matter, as anyone may prove for himself if he will take the trouble to try the experiment over an extended period.

The consulting room is to the laity not unlike a torture chamber. Chairs and tables are arrayed in juxtaposition with tormenting accuracy; couches with arrangements for lowering the head and raising the feet, and other devices for creating uncomfortable positions, forms a prominent background, while tables are strewn with instruments of various size and shape suggestive of many varieties of painful application. There is a very popular notion that a surgical instrument is a minister of torture, and persons uninstructed on this point, when in the presence of these scientific appliances, rack their brains and excruciate their feelings to discover the special use of each. Rolls of lint suggest ghastly wounds, sticking-plaster means broken heads, a stethoscope conjures a picture of exquisite pain, while a "spatula," presents so awful an aspect as to be quite too much for the nerves of most people.

Every other bottle of the row on a shelf is imagined to contain some deadly poison, of which a drop means instant death in an agony of convulsions, and the alternate smaller phials are understood to be filled

with "caustic," a commodity patients imagine themselves to be always in immediate danger of. Thankful are many to escape the medical clutches without having first enjoyed a free and liberal application of some "burning" fluid—in their estimation the most approved method of treatment for one and all diseases!

We have seen a patient suffering from some nervous affection—perhaps hardly a good subject for experiment—taken into a dark closet to have his eyes examined. Much persuasion was necessary to induce him to enter the small chamber; to sit down for some time he absolutely refused, and at last, when he was comfortably settled, on seeing the complicated apparatus used for throwing light into the pupil, and hearing the ominous "click" as the operator adjusted it to the proper level, with one wild whoop he sprang up, overturning all arrangements, and ere one could clutch the disappearing tails of his coat he was out of the room, out of the office, up the steps, and fifty yards from the hospital gates, which nothing short of a miracle would persuade him to enter again. Perhaps his terror was not wholly unjustifiable, as it must be confessed the appearance of the apparatus, with its little dark lantern, is somewhat of an infernal-machine nature.

Meanwhile, however, we are keeping anxious friends awaiting the inspection of their charges, and while some exercise their ingenuity in discovering the use of the surrounding paraphernalia, let us go on to the observation of those already undergoing examination. Three doctors are in charge, and they are severally occupied on as many small patients, so soon as one is dismissed his place being filled. Number one is engaged in looking down the throat of his victim, a process he finds difficult, as the victim persists in keeping out his tongue (according to previous instruction), and effectually impeding the view. No sooner is the mouth opened than the tongue is thrust forth, and in spite of remonstrance, persuasion, and threats, the boy cannot be convinced that his tongue is not the special object of interest; it is like a mechanical toy, which, by some wonderful working of wires, has the hinge of its jaw and the tip of its tongue in mysterious connection, so that the action of one is inevitably followed by the protrusion of the other.

The second doctor is occupied with a tiny specimen of a girl, and as she, poor little mortal, has some spinal affection, her examination necessitates a very undress condition. It is too pitiable to be ludicrous to see the wistful glances she casts at her garments as one after another they are removed, until at last the poor mite stands arrayed only in the dress of nature, confounded, abashed, and inexpressibly wretched.

Another infant fights, kicks, and struggles with mother, nurse, and doctor, vehemently objecting to part with a pair of bright red stockings which decorate his legs. It is probably the first time of wearing, and, as they were put on for the doctor's benefit, this young Turk resolves they shall be taken off only at *his* pleasure, which is not at present. For long it is a question of equal odds, so determined are both parties. When at last the vermilion hose are removed and display a pair of sturdy bowed legs, the doctor is by no means allowed to pursue his investigations in peace, for the legs refuse to be inspected, and the feet kick out right, left, and everywhere with a determination that baffles the medical resources. Presently a sounding slap announces that the mother's patience is exhausted, and her irritability applies a very

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