

A Doctor's Story

How a Trained Nurse Dominated One of His Patients
By EDWIN T. MARTIN
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"Is that you, doctor?"
"Yes. What is it?"
"My nurse is killing me."
"Who are you?"

There was a click, followed by silence. I waited for some time, but getting no response, hung up the receiver, turned over and tried to go to sleep. The effort was unsuccessful. I recommended the trained nurses for all my patients and felt responsible for them. And if there had been no responsibility whatever the fact that a nurse was killing any one and I had been called on to prevent the murder, was quite enough to keep me awake.

The next morning it occurred to me that the woman who had called must have been interrupted at the telephone. Whoever interrupted her, if she was delirious I would either have been called up by the person who had stopped her and the matter explained or the fact would be mentioned to me during the day while I was making my rounds of visits. I started out after my morning office hour had expired expecting a solution of the mystery.

I called upon every one of my patients that day who was ill enough to have a trained nurse. There was not one of the women, so far as I could discover, who was not perfectly satisfied with her nurse. There was not one who was delirious or had been delirious during the night. After having made the last call on my list I tried to think of some one I might have omitted. But this was but a momentary thought, for it was impossible, even if I had made no memorandum, that I should have forgotten any seriously sick person I was treating.

I went to bed that night troubled. There was a mystery that I did not like. I regarded it as possible that a nurse might so dominate a sick person, especially a woman, that the invalid would not dare to complain of her to the attending physician. I had once been treating a woman who when I sent the nurse out of the room for something said to me in a hurried whisper, "Doctor, if you don't take that nurse away from me I shall die." I dismissed the nurse and never forgot the episode. Indeed, it taught me that it might be possible for a patient to suffer under a nurse's care or want of care or dominating will power and not be accorded an opportunity to inform the doctor without the nurse being aware of the complaint.

When making professional visits I keep in constant touch with my office by telephone and the next day was called up by my assistant, who said: "A very singular message came about half an hour ago. A woman telephoned, 'Doctor, oh, doctor, do get rid of this nurse! She is—' The message was cut off at that point and I heard nothing more."

introducing him in some cases as my assistant, in others as a consulting physician or specialist whose views I desired to obtain. While driving from one house to the next I intended to visit I gave him a hint as to what I should require of him, that he might be prepared to speak with an apparent show of knowledge of the subject, especially when there was a nurse who had some knowledge of it herself. Though some of my cases were caused by anxiety to me, I could not but be amazed at the serious, thoughtful manner he entered upon each case I asked him to consider. He even knew enough of a consulting physician's relations with the doctor who calls him into the case to defer to the other's judgment while giving an opinion. And I was surprised at how adroitly he concealed the fact that he didn't know what he was talking about.

We entered one house where the nurse, Mrs. Webster, a woman rather older than the average, was a very motherly person and evidently devoted to her charge, Miss Edwards, down with typhoid fever. Or, rather, the patient was in that weak state which follows immediately after the disease. Jernegan put on more professional im-

portance than usual, reminding me of the medical doctors I have known who conceal their want of knowledge by a case under an appearance of great wisdom. Presently he said to me, "Please excuse me, doctor, there are certain features of the case that I should like to inquire about from the nurse." Then, turning to her, he addressed her, "Mrs. Webster, I desire to confer with you in another room."

I glanced at the nurse, and her expression spoke volumes. She said not refuse to go with him, yet her face told me that she dreaded to do so. She looked a sort of appeal to me as though to communicate without speaking that there was a reason why she should not leave the patient. But Jernegan's face indicated that the interview in another room must take place, and the woman led him out. He shut the door behind them and left me with the patient.

The moment we were alone together an agonized expression came over the invalid's face. "Have you called me by telephone?" I asked. "Yes." "Tell me in a few words what is the trouble." "She's trying to poison me." The expression on her face was so full of horror that I stopped her. I went to the telephone and called for another nurse, then back to the patient, told her what I had done and that I would remain until the arrival of the substitute. This done, I went about the room collecting what medicines I could find.

Meanwhile Jernegan remained in the other room with the nurse. In ten minutes the one I had called for arrived, and, placing my patient under her care, I went to the room where Jernegan and Mrs. Webster were. Jernegan was looking at a book. Mrs. Webster was standing looking out of a window. She appeared very much crestfallen. "There's your quarry," said Jernegan, for the first time dropping all assumption of being a doctor. "I know it," I replied. "The patient has told me all. Mrs. Webster will poison me as I go downstairs." We all went to the floor below where we would not disturb the patient with a scene and I told Mrs. Webster to prepare to leave the house. She said she must go to the patient's room, but I did not permit this, of course.

I did not like simply to turn the woman out because I suspected she had some malign intention toward her patient, and I did not like to have her arrested, for I hardly knew what to do. Notwithstanding the all that would leave the ship unprotected. A man begging for the life of his wife and children is pretty hard to refuse. I never liked doing things by halves. Having decided to send a force to the house I determined to send every man I had. This would give them the greatest strength in the face of danger and throw all the responsibility for the safety of the ship not act upon this information without the discovery of some poison on the premises. This could not be done without an analysis, and I felt obliged to disengage Mrs. Webster, though I told Jernegan to have her shadowed for a few days. None of the drugs found turned out to be poison. This did not prove that the nurse did not have some poison which we could not find. I could get nothing very satisfactory out of the patient and was forced to believe that her fears were the result of her physical condition. I therefore paid no further attention to the matter so far as concerned the nurse.

My Grandfather's Story

From the Kindness of His Heart He Fell Into a Trap
By EDNA L. TROOP
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My grandfather, who was a seafaring man almost from the time he was born till he was sixty, told me this story when I was a boy. There were certain incidents and pictures in his narrative that made a lasting impression on my childish mind. I cannot give them as minutely as he who was the central figure of the story nor describe the tropical scenery as he saw it, lighted by a full moon. I can only mention the salient points as I remember them after an interval of many years.

"I was first mate," he said, "of the bark Ann Eliza. We were lying one night in the mouth of St. Johns river, Florida. The crew had gone ashore to dance at one of the plantations, and the captain had gone in the same boat with them to attend to some business. I was left aboard in command of ten men. The captain had heard that there was a good deal of insurrection among the negro slaves in that region and that bands of negroes had cut loose from their masters and were going about looting what ever of value they could find. He charged me therefore, to keep a sharp lookout for boats approaching the ship and not permit them to come too near."

"I was sitting on the quarterdeck with a minimum of clothing on me for the weather was hot, smoking a cigar. The full moon was about an hour high and lit up the palms on the shores and the moss hanging on the forest trees, giving the scenery a peculiarly weird effect. There was not a cloud in the sky and no sound except the waves rolling in on the beach about a mile away, the monotonous rustling being occasionally broken by a song from a negro boat near the river bank.

"I was enjoying the shimmer of the moonlight on the water when I discovered a black speck in it. The water was comparatively smooth, so that I could keep the speck all ways in view. It soon grew more distinct, and I could distinguish what looked like a couple of paddles, one on each side, flashing alternately in the moonlight. As the spot drew nearer I saw that these were not paddles, but the arms of some one swimming hand over hand, the spot being the swimmer's head.

"Pretty soon the swimmer, a man, approached the ship. I leaned over the taffrail and asked him what he wanted. 'Please, cap'n,' he said, 'let me come aboard and I'll tell you.' 'I ordered a rope ladder lowered, and the man came up. He was not much above the poor white trash of this section, and he owned a small plantation fronting on the river bank just below us, with a few negroes. He had learned that they were that night intending to murder him and all his family and take possession of his plantation. He had come to us for assistance.

"According to the man's story—and he seemed very much affected—unless I sent a force to guard his family I would permit their death. If I sent only a part of my men they might also be killed. If I sent them all it would leave the ship unprotected. A man begging for the life of his wife and children is pretty hard to refuse. I never liked doing things by halves. Having decided to send a force to the house I determined to send every man I had. This would give them the greatest strength in the face of danger and throw all the responsibility for the safety of the ship not act upon this information without the discovery of some poison on the premises. This could not be done without an analysis, and I felt obliged to disengage Mrs. Webster, though I told Jernegan to have her shadowed for a few days. None of the drugs found turned out to be poison. This did not prove that the nurse did not have some poison which we could not find. I could get nothing very satisfactory out of the patient and was forced to believe that her fears were the result of her physical condition. I therefore paid no further attention to the matter so far as concerned the nurse.

"They stopped rowing, and a negro's voice called out: 'Cap'n, can't you give us a little liquor? We ain't had nothin' to drink for a long spell.' 'You keep off or I'll give you hot shot!' 'I heard a discussion in a low tone in the boat, then every one dipped in the water at once, and they made a spurt straight for the ship. I dropped the man of the tiller with a musket ball and fired another shot among the oarsmen. The loss of their coxswain and the wounding of two men at the oars dethroned the chief I hoped for. The two wounded men were both sent to the port side of the boat, and when they were disabled the others pulled the boat around to the starboard, exposing a broadside.

"A man in the bow holding a long pole with an enormous hook on the end was evidently the leader of the party, and he made an efficient chief. I heard him tell his men in negro dialect that there was only one man aboard the ship, that there was, enough loot there to buy the freedom of every one of them and that it might be possible for them to take the ship and sail away with her. Then he ordered the pieces of the disabled men fired, equalizing the crew on both sides and under his direction, the boat was headed for the ship.

"I felt that my life depended on picking off that man standing in the bow, straight for his grapple hook. I aimed the boat lurched, and I missed him. I fired again and saw him stagger, but I could not have wounded him, severely, for he maintained his post."

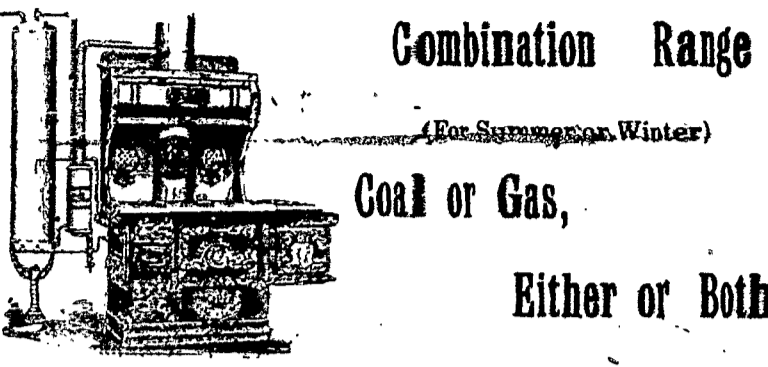
"My stock of loaded muskets was now half exhausted, and I did not from the first calculate on reloading. But I hadn't even time to use one of those that were charged, for the boat's nose struck the ship's side, and while the men were engaged, an ordinary boat hook the leader endeavored to put his grapple over the gunwale. I fought him off with a cutlass, and several of the men in the boat jumped into the water and swam for the anchor chain. 'Here was a division of the attacking force which I had dreaded from the first. I did what I should have done as soon as the boat struck the ship. Seizing a hand grenade, I threw it down on to the boat. It struck the water and did not explode. The man with the long hook had by this time got it fastened over the gunwale and was climbing up by the pole hand over hand, carrying on one arm the end of a rope ladder. He was an athletic rascal and brave as he was strong. The distance he must climb was not over half a dozen feet. I waited till he had come within a yard of the gunwale, then reached over and clove his skull with a cutlass. He dropped back into the boat in which there were but three others, and I saw that his loss caused confusion and faint heartedness among them.

"I now had two sets of men to deal with; but their leader having been put out of the fight, I felt more hope than at any time since the attack. With out giving the men in the boat time to recover I seized another hand grenade and, pointing it with a deliberate aim, hurled it down on those below. It struck the bottom of the boat, exploded and blew both boat and men to smithereens.

"What I have told you as having occurred after the men started to swim for the shore occupied only a portion of a minute. As soon as one party was destroyed I turned my attention to the other. Three men were swimming forward, and before I had time to form a plan one of them had swung himself up on to the chains under the bowsprit, another was within a few yards of the anchor chain, while the third was still some distance away from anything to cling to. Seizing a cutlass, I ran forward. It was not my only weapon, for I had two loaded pistols in my belt. Running under the gunwale on the dock that I might not be seen, I appeared on the bowsprit just as the foremost man was laying a hand on it. With my cutlass I dropped him into the water.

"I now realized for the first time that I was in no further danger. There were two men against me, but they had no other weapon than cold steel, while I had the advantage of position and a loaded pistol. I had shed enough blood, so I called to the man climbing the anchor chain to let go or I would shoot him. He dropped into the water and struck out for the shore, followed by the man who had lagged behind. 'They had scarcely swung out of sight when I heard the sound of oars, and, turning, there but a few hundred yards away was the boat I had sent on an errand of mercy. When the crew came aboard the fugitives had reached the shore. My men had heard my first shot, and the planter took to a thicket. Fearing trouble, they returned, but too late to be of service.

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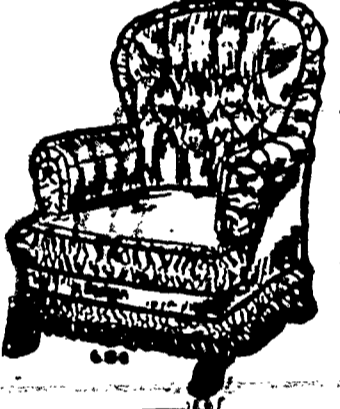
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