

The Death Tablet

By EVERETT MCLOUD

Dr. Jernegan, who had acted as a surgeon in the Spanish-American war, was one of the first medical men to offer his services to France on the opening of the great world's war. While in Cuba he was a very young man and full of military as well as the medical spirit. He had fought a duel while the army was operating before Santiago and on one occasion had distinguished himself by remaining among the wounded when all his comrades had been driven off the field.

But Jernegan at forty-three was a different man from the hot-headed Jernegan at twenty-five. From a man of impulse he had developed into a man of thought and well-considered action. He rose rapidly in the esteem of the French medical staff and before long was made the medical director of an army division.

At a period when the French were hard pressed by the Germans in the latter's efforts to capture Verdun Jernegan was directing the distribution of surgeons upon different parts of the field, vainly endeavoring to make the limited number of his men and staff, when a young French surgeon named Dervieux came in with a complaint against Dr. Le Fevre, a fellow surgeon, who had ordered him off the field for what Dr. Le Fevre considered gross neglect of a wounded man.

"Doctor," said Dervieux to Jernegan, "I propose to challenge Le Fevre to a fight, and it is necessary for me to secure your permission in the matter."

"Go to the front," replied Jernegan sternly, "where the Germans are now launching an attack, and if you are not killed I will give Le Fevre a chance at you."

"When the attack was repulsed Dervieux returned to his superior. Jernegan was so absorbed in his duties and responsibilities that he did not recognize him.

"Well," he said, "what can I do for you?"

"I wish your permission, doctor, to fight a duel."

"Well, you can't get it. There are enough of our surgeons killed by the enemy without their killing each other. Duelling under such circumstances is reprehensible."

"But, doctor, I have heard that you fought a duel while in the American army and at the front."

The doctor was taken aback by this. He made no reply for a few moments. He was thinking. Finally he said:

"Come to me with your adversary tomorrow after we have got some of these wounded men off to hospital, and I will see what I can do for you."

The next afternoon the two antagonists reported at Jernegan's headquarters and stood before him scowling at each other. Jernegan endeavored to impress upon them the folly of duelling, especially when there was plenty of necessary fighting on hand, but the custom has never been stamped out in France, though many efforts have been made to eradicate it. Finally recognizing the futility of his efforts, the American said to his subordinates:

"France cannot spare any of her surgeons now; but since your gentlemen must show your pluck you may do so under a plan by which only one will die. Under the code both may be killed or at least disabled. Under my plan one will surely die while the other will still be fit for duty."

The doctor pledged both parties to abide by his plan, then produced two tablets which he placed upon a table before him. They were exactly the same size, shape and color.

"One of these pills," said Jernegan, "contains a deadly poison; the other is harmless. You may each select one."

"Now, gentlemen," continued the medical director, taking out his watch, "presently I will give the signal for the combat by directing each one of you to swallow his tablet."

There is nothing so wearing as indecision. Very soon both disputants began to show signs of nervousness. But the signal did not come. Dervieux's hand wherein lay his tablet began to tremble, and Le Fevre showed signs of weakness in his legs.

"Doctor," said Dervieux, "you must have kept us waiting half an hour. Is it necessary?"

"I have kept you only five minutes," was the reply.

Presently Le Fevre showed signs of weakening.

"Surely, doctor," he said, "we have been waiting an hour. How much longer are you going to keep us?"

"You have been holding those tablets just twelve minutes," replied the doctor. "By the bye, I forgot to ask you if he who must die desires any word sent home and what disposition is to be made of the body?"

By this time neither of the duellists was in a condition to give such directions. Jernegan kept them in suspense in all twenty minutes, then, seeing that both were in a mental agony that might produce serious results, said:

"Gentlemen, how would you like to make me referee in this matter?"

The officers consented. Le Fevre said that Dervieux, as the challenger, must speak first. Dervieux consented, and Jernegan took both tablets and swallowed them.

"They were made of powdered crackers," he said, "and are harmless. And now, Dr. Dervieux, please state your complaint against Dr. Le Fevre."

The case was stated, and the referee decided it to the satisfaction of both parties, who shook hands and returned to their proper duties.

OPERATING A SUBMARINE.

The Method When the Ship Is About to Make an Attack.

Every submarine has its commander—generally a captain—who acts as the very brains of the ship. No one else can give orders, for so interconnected are all the machines that the conflicting commands from more than one officer would almost surely result in an accident; hence every one reports directly to the captain through the second officer in command, who, by the way, is also responsible for the correct operation of everything from the ballast tanks to the torpedoes.

In making the attack the captain mans the periscope in the main operating room, just beneath the conning tower. The lenses and prisms in the periscope tube transmit the images from the sighting piece above the water down to the periscope eyepiece.

"When the vessel dives the decks are first cleared. Then the hatches are sealed down and the oil engines are stopped in quick succession. Storage batteries are turned on to drive the electric propelling motors. Electric machinery must be used under water because the oil engines consume precious air and exhaust poisonous gases.

On the next word from the captain water from outside is allowed to fill the huge ballast tanks in the central hull. Other ballast tanks at the ends of the boat are partially filled to hold the ship on an even keel. This tilting of the submarine, of course, can be delicately controlled by the buoyancy gauges and controls in the operating room.

The weight of all this water causes the submarine to sink, but not completely. The horizontal rudders at the stern of the ship are used to give the final touches to the dive. The commander directs the man at the wheel how far down he wishes to go. By watching the depth gauges in front of him the wheelman can so tip the diving rudders that the proper depth can be found immediately and held exactly.

It takes but a minute or two to dive in torpedoing a ship; the vessel must be turned to aim the torpedo tubes, which lie parallel with the central axis of the submarine—in the bow. The command is given to fire. The gunners in the forward compartment receive the order through speaking tubes or telephones. The torpedo is discharged from its tube by compressed air.—Popular Science Monthly.

Why People Get Fat.

Among curious popular fancies is the idea that an individual may become obese without eating too much and may remain obese even when very little food is taken. If a person each day eats a butter ball weighing only a third of an ounce, in excess of the food actually needed it seems trifling, insignificant, but continued over a year it would involve a gain in weight of nine pounds of fatty tissue or in ten years of ninety pounds. An ounce of bread or half a glass of milk more than the food requirement for the day will bring about the same result. Conversely, if the quantity of food taken be only slightly below the needs of the body some of the body's own fat is used and the body weight falls, a process which may be extended over a long period of time.—Dr. Graham Lusk in World's Work.

Madrid's Throne Room.

The throne room of the royal palace at Madrid is one of the most magnificent in the world. Decorated in red and gold, it contains rock crystal chandeliers, colossal looking glasses of the finest quality, marble tables and a ceiling of gilded porphyry. The ceiling is painted by Tiepolo with the "Majesty of Spain." In illustration of the virtue of the kings and the unanimity of the people, who are represented in the different costumes of Spain receive on grand occasions when alive and when dead are laid out in state.

Northcliffe's Ways.

Lord Northcliffe, when he founded the London Mail was a year getting ready. The fledgling paper was issued daily, almost complete in every respect, for three months before a single copy was sold to the public. In these months Northcliffe was scouring the world for men, appraising material, sounding tendencies, getting ready to deliver a thrust that when delivered carried conviction and knowledge. If there is one thing in Northcliffe's life it is thoroughness.—Isaac F. Marcosson in Everybody's.

The Jenny Lind Rock.

The Ohio river claims among its treasures the Jenny Lind rock. The singer was a passenger on a steamer which struck on a sand bar near the rock, and while waiting for the boat to be floated Miss Lind had boatmen row her out to the rock, where she stood alone and sang a song.

Big Difference.

Uncle Ezra—So ye just got back from New York! What's the difference between the city and the country?

Uncle Eben—Waal, in the country you go to bed feeling all in and get up feeling fine, and in the city you go to bed feeling fine and get up feeling all in.—Life.

Tale the Grocer Told.

"With these high prices," said the customer to the grocer, "you must be making a lot of money."

"No," replied the grocer, "I'm not making any more money! My customers merely owe me more."—Detroit Free Press.

It is not the insurrections of ignorance that are dangerous, but the revolts of intelligence.—Lowell.

A STRANGE PEOPLE

Red Heads of Asiatic Turkey Their Throats Red Knotted Cords and Allow Their Wives to Beat Them—All Babies Are Salted When Born.

HAVE SOME QUEER CUSTOMS.

All Males Wear Red Caps and Around Their Throats Red Knotted Cords and Allow Their Wives to Beat Them—All Babies Are Salted When Born.

Strange people are the Red Heads of Asiatic Turkey. They are the last of the Baal worshippers. The men wear red caps; hence their name Red Heads. They also wear red knotted cords around their necks. The cord is put on during babyhood and is never removed. It is interwoven with the body after death. They shave their heads except for a patch on the top, and here they allow the hair to grow long and plait it into pigstails, which hang about their ears. They are tall, wiry fellows, with enormous appetites for both food and drink.

The women, who do not veil themselves and who dress simply in loose fitting garments, are thin and spare, but wonderfully strong. In their homes they wear breeches as well as skirts. There is no wife beating among the Red Heads, but plenty of husband beating. The husbands take their frequent chastisements meekly and patiently. They employ themselves, both the women and the men, in agriculture and theft. They produce a couple of crops, tobacco and durra. The rest of their time is given up to tending the Turks' crops and cattle.

In the center of every village there is a small circle called off, and in this space there is planted the special religious emblem, an evergreen oak. No one except the father priest of the village enters the enclosed ground, which is decorated with small flags, strings of coins and bright colored beads. Around and about the circle the Red Heads celebrate the only religious festival known to them, "the gathering of the new moon," which takes place every month. Directly a new moon makes its appearance the people are called together by a lay priest beating a barrel shaped drum stuck end up on the ground.

Fires are lit, the cooking utensils placed thereon and the sheep killed by the priest, who sprinkles a little of the animal's blood on the oak, and the carcasses are cut up into joints and the latter cooked over the fires, before which millet and wheat cakes are by this time baking on huge flags. In the meantime tables on trestles are set up and laid with wooden plates, horn spoons and steel knives and forks, and soon the feasting begins. The women wait on the men, who gorge steadily for about an hour and then, while their wives and daughters are clearing up the little they have left, indulge in dancing, drinking and general merriment.

No religious formality marks the feast, no blessing or benediction or grace. Indeed, not at birth or burial or marriage do these survivors of the ancient Baal worshippers employ any formula or observe anything in the nature of a religious ceremony. They have no Bible, no prayer book, no liturgy, no place of worship. Their one and only sanctuary is the sacred tree enclosure, their only religious symbol the evergreen oak.

When a baby is born it is warmly clothed, placed on a large wooden platform and taken to the priest, who, in front of the sacred tree, strips it and salts it. Probably this accounts for the few Red Heads that now survive, it being said that their numbers have dwindled to a mere seven or eight thousand. For the service the priest is always given a shoulder from the sheep which it is usual to kill on such occasions and which forms the principal item in the birth feast. Other duties that the priest has to carry out are the cutting of three horizontal cuts with a dagger just above the level of the eyebrows on the forehead of the dead and the settling of all disputes.

When a couple becomes engaged the woman spends most of her time cooking dainty and tasty dishes and trotting round with them to her lover's home, followed by her father with wine and spirits. Breach of promise is almost unknown, for the youth who jilts his bride is hanged. An erring husband is hanged on some remote tree by the red cord he wears round his neck, and the body is left as a warning to others. An erring wife mysteriously disappears, and no questions are asked. A man who deserts his wife also is hanged, while the woman who deserts her husband is compelled to return to him.

There is a secret ceremony of initiation which every Red Head is compelled to undergo on attaining his seventeenth birthday. It involves seclusion for seven days and going without food and drink for three days. At the termination of this preliminary test the youth is taught certain passwords and grips by which he may recognize his brethren, and a red circle is tattooed on his breast. The strange people live on terms of friendship with the whole of their neighbors, with the exception of the Turks, whom they hate and treat accordingly.—J. C. Bristow-Noble in London Globe.

Gave Him Pause.

"Will you marry me?" "If mother says so, all right." "Hum! Is mother going to decide all our questions for us in case this marriage takes place?"—Kansas City Journal.

Nothing is politically right which is morally wrong.—O'Connell.

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The big reason for this is that the device manufactured in this industry has recently been recognized by the United States Government as the one means for stopping the war. And at that, mind you, it is not ammunition.

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The European war has shown up the wonders of this particular invention. But it is a fact that after peace is established, it will fill a long felt commercial want. There are some who say it will rank in popularity with the automobile. Naturally, that future business will be in the hands of those who enter the industry now, while all Patent rights are offered by the United States.

Accordingly, certain Local people are organizing a corporation to engage in this line. It will start with an authorized capital of One Million Dollars.

Its management throughout will be in the hands of practical and competent men, whose experience was gained with the other companies.

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