

RANDOM THOUGHTS OF A HOSPITAL PATIENT.

"Sometimes I sits and thinks
Sometimes I just sits"

—(Bill Spokeshave.)

As an alternative to the Funeral Parlour, we must all visit the hospital occasionally—notwithstanding the truism that a period of probation in the latter institution has often presaged a finishing course in the former.

There is no doubt that the removal of tonsils and tumours, and indeed the general overhauling and decarbonising of which the human body stands in need is best accomplished under the aegis of Aesculapius in person—if people would only see it.

So I am a patient in hospital, despite the fact that my tonsils have already been successfully removed four times, and that no tumours have been geographically discovered on my person, notwithstanding diligent explorations by many famous explorers.

As I am writing to schedule, with a hypodermic looming in the middle distance (two hour hence)—I had better get the bulk of this article finished before then, because when the serum reaction sets in (which is confidently predicted by those best fitted to prophesy)—I shall probably be more inclined to write a deal of libellous and blasphemous matter.

For those unfortunates, like myself, to whom Rest as a treatment is a *sine qua non*, life is a bit of a trial at times. If you play a gramophone your temperature shoots up like a rocket, whereas a gramophoneless week is melancholia personified. The only compromise is to solicit the aid of a sufferer from one of the more fashionable diseases—rheumatoid arthritis, a heart case or such. The ingenuousness of one of these is perhaps worth mentioning. Having inspanned him to wind the gramophone, he gave a few reluctant turns to the handle, and, going away, said: "I suppose that will last for a while—call me when it runs down!"

It was not WHEN we called him, but WHAT we called him! Oh! pastoral simplicity!!

To the patient with a "Puck"-like sense of humour, some of the hospital routines—which to the strictly professional eye are commonplace—are, to say the least of it, diverting. I refer to the "confessional" system, evolved by the Medical Hierarchy and deputed generally to a student of either sex. Here an unfortunate fellow patient is badgered and baited as to his thoughts, words, deeds and omissions covering his blue, or pale pink past as the case may be. The lady student, with inquisitorial pen and sphinx-like countenance drives and delves—questions and queries whilst the helpless victim squirms and writhes, with goggling eyes and all the symptoms which prestage coming prostration. The blankness of the bed-letter on her knee presents an uncomfortable sense of nudity to the eye, which moving pen does not tend to dispel.

And then there is that look of dazed and doleful facial pessimism which the exam. season engenders in the otherwise happy nursing staff. To hear a passing Diana—dinner tray in hands bearing chicken, sole and other delectables to tempt our appetites—muttering feverishly anent humerus, foetus, and femurs, is not perhaps the best possible apertif.

While hospital, to the student, serves as a useful place in which to pass the time between one night's dancing and another; and to the town practitioner as a place in which to wait in the mornings until his city surgery is dusted—to the patient it is an Institution omniscient. Here, the sufferer, in between the frequent, though affectionate palpations and auscultations lavished on him by Honoraries, M.P.'s, and students ad

infinitum, can contemplate many things—not the least, the wonderful intricacies of his own body. Added to the attraction of discovering he has heart valves, bronchi, and two legs of equal lineal proportions, there is always the possibility that in addition to the complaint which was originally diagnosed, he may learn a multitude of obscure diseases of which he is the victim. I have been accused by six different overseas doctors of as many divers complaints, until at last, like little Johnny's collection of cigarette cards, I was but four short of the set!

But this palpation business is a pregnant source of human study to the patient. By it, whilst meekly running the gauntlet at the hands of an enthusiastic class of medicals, he can sort into types his persecutors. There is the bucolic student with hands of iron that dig into one's chest and whose rappings savour more of the plough than the lancet. And there is the gentleman who feels over your body with a touch, which in a more predatory avocation, would be indispensable! One cannot help noticing the loving doggedness with which one is sometimes attacked by the well meaning student who is bent on making a diagnosis at all costs. And lastly, there is the gentleman whose Bacchic fingers slither round enquiringly, as if probing for a wee deoch-an doris!

And then the Auscultation! I never hear or see the word Auscultation without immediately thinking of an open pot of jam. During the preliminary dissertations of the lecturer the patient is almost lulled to sleep by the lethargic, yawning postures of the students. Percussion or palpation spells BOREDOM to them in large capitals. But let the lecturer give the sign for auscultation—lo! the patient is metamorphosed into a pot of jam, with myriads of flies imbibing joy through stethoscopic antennae-

I've had the injection, so let us end here, leaving the blasphemies to your own immagination.

TWENTY-ONE.

THE LAY OF THE MEDICAL STUDENT.

A DIRGE.

Life is scarcely worth the living,
Dull and dreary as can be,
As I ponder with misgiving
What the morrow means to me.

With the lark each day you'll find me—
Lord, how it begins to pall!—
Leaving a warm bed behind me,
Crawling to the hospital.

Now and then mayhap it chances
That I'm just a trifle late,
When the chief's expressive glances
Give an inkling of my fate.

Comes then query upon query,
In a voice so charged with bias,
That, alas! I soon grow weary
Emulating Ananias.

"This? er" patient whispers 'ulcer'—
"Pain and retching after food,
Rather quick and feeble pulse, sir,
Vomits blood, I understood."