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THE EXPERIENCES OF AN UP-COUNTRY NURSE

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BY EDMONTON.

A WAY in the district, miles away from the railway station and well off the beaten track of district board roads, there is a narrow country lane which leads to the foot of what appears to be a most beautiful range of hills. For years the writer was only allowed to gaze upon them from a town at the base of those hills.

To view them at a distance, sometimes in the light of rosy dawn, or at midday, when with sunlight and shadow effects they looked as if they might be the home of a myriad fairies, or to see them in the glow of setting sun when all the glory of purple sunset and twilight shadows was upon them made one fervently desire to ascend the rocky paths and explore the wonders that must lie behind such enchanting scenes, and to become acquainted with the land that was so fascinating at a distance.

Patience invariably has its reward and the day dawned when the opportunity came not only to visit these enchanting hills but seriously to take up work upon them.

The little mission station was situated in a most beautiful spot. Surrounded by lovely fruit gardens, beautiful forests, sparkling waterfalls, and green pasturelands, both man and beast could enjoy to the full the blessing of Nature's provision. There were wild flowers in abundance, pretty ferns growing out of the mossy rocks, wild orchids shooting into life in most unexpected places, while out of the bare rock and stone the most lovely lilies would bloom and cast forth their sweet odour, making one feel that it was a little garden of Eden.

One of the most interesting features of the work on these hills is the dispensary. This is in charge of an Indian doctor and is the only place on these hills where medical assistance can be obtained; hence the work is not only well appreciated, but very popular. The doctor at that time had no assistant and the writer was often required to help out in cases of emergency and when a nurse's practical assistance was needed as well as the physician's skill.

One day, just as we were about to breakfast, there appeared a procession of hill men coming along the footpath across a grassy meadow opposite the bungalow. They made direct for the dispensary and in a few minutes all available assistance was needed.

The patient had been a victim of bear mauling. At dawn he had gone out with his herd of buffaloes and cows and was leading them to a place of pasture. On his way through the forest he disturbed a large bear in his wanderings. The bear pounced upon the unsuspecting herdsman and soon made him the butt of his anger. Fortunately other hill men were soon on the spot, but not before serious damage had been done. The man was

placed upon an improvised stretcher and carried to his home where for a whole day he was still more tortured by well-meaning relatives and friends who applied various so-called remedies advised by the local medicine man.

Imagine the condition of the patient as he was tenderly undressed and the extent of his wounds explored. The vicious animal had used both teeth and claws and caused very serious and deep wounds in the abdomen. The animal had evidently gripped the man from front to back puncturing the tissues so deeply with the claws that the wounds almost connected. Another huge wound in the groin had evidently been made with the teeth and was showing signs of sepsis, while smaller bruises and less severe wounds were on the legs, arms and face. The whole made the man a pitiable object to behold.

It seemed difficult to know where to begin but at length all foul-smelling wounds had been cleansed, cavities packed, and the lesser wounds suitably dressed. The patient was settled in bed and necessary nourishment given. Women of the village arrived with their cooking vessels and his relatives were deputed to keep watch over him.

In spite of his advanced age, and the septic condition of his wounds the injuries soon showed signs of healing and it was hoped that with patient and careful treatment the man would recover.

A week passed and then one morning a deputation of the patient's friends presented themselves at the bungalow door. Their plea was that it was harvest time and they could stay no longer. They must take the patient with them as there would be no one left to cook for him. In spite of every kind of persuasion, pointing out that if only one man and woman stayed it would be sufficient, nothing would effect an alteration of their decision. "We must go, and he must go with us," was their final word and they determined to go that day after the dressings had been renewed.

Although the patient had certainly improved and we hoped that with continued care there was no fear of danger yet it was inevitable that once he was away from the means of regular treatment he would go back and his condition be even worse than at the beginning. He would have to share the fate of so many others who are left to the thoughtless care of selfish relatives. It was with feelings of disappointment and sorrow that we saw this aged man depart. He had suffered so much and had been snatched as it were from the jaws of death. Medicines and dressings were given, instructions were sent to the nearest mission worker to try and help the people to care for him and we wondered what the next news of our interesting patient would be.

Some weeks afterwards, while camping in the vicinity of his village, we enquired of the welfare of our patient, and were surprised to learn that he was still alive and had made a partial recovery, although he was not able to leave his house and would be a cripple for the rest of his days.