

A QUESTION OF LABELS.

Ronald Melton, one of Battersley's youngest practitioners, was making up his patients' medicines after his day's round. As he deftly filled the bottles, he listened to the talk of his friend Dick Lyde, a tall weather-torn, globe-trotter, who had just returned from South Africa. They had been old fellow students; but Lyde, at the completion of his hospital course, was left a small fortune, and indulged in his boyish desire for travelling; while Melton, having obtained his qualifications, settled down, after some assistantships in town and country, as a general practitioner at Battersley, and flourished in a modest way with an income that was increasing yearly.

'And so you're not married, Ronald?' said Lyde. 'I thought a wife was essential to a doctor's success.'

'All in good time, Dick. I'm engaged and hope soon to be a Benedict.'

'And who is she? I'm ready to be a brother to her beforehand, in memory of our jolly days at the hospital. And I fancy I've a diamond or two among my South African trinkets which would look very well when set.'

'Thank you much. She's Laura Browne, the niece of one of my best patients, Mr. Rearley, of the Poplars, who's been ailing with one thing and another for a long time. Laura's a dear girl, and content to wait. Not that her uncle is likely to leave her anything, though he's well-to-do. For he has a much younger wife, and is much attached to her. I say this only because some of the Battersley gossipmongers are kind enough to insinuate that I'm engaged to Laura in the hope of her having a dowry or legacy.'

'Oh, hang the gossipmongers!' said Lyde. 'If you and she understand each other, it's enough. Is she well-favored to you?'

'Yes, I think so. She's devoted to her husband. She's his second wife—married her when a governess at some house he visited. And she's grateful, though he's a very dictatorial man and lives by clock-work. She's a babyish faced little woman, very quiet and retiring. Everybody likes her, however. There, that completes my dispensing to-night—Rearley's medicine and liniment.'

'Well, now, you come over to my rooms at the 'Royal Arms' and see some of my curiosities,' said Lyde, lighting his pipe.

'All right. Here, Jim' (to his handy boy), 'take out these medicines.'

Jim put the bottles, after glancing at their directions, into his oilskin covered basket and disappeared with promptitude; while Melton and Lyde went to the hotel, and smoked, chatted, and looked over Lyde's collection.

Meanwhile, Jim delivered all his medicines. Mr. Rearley's bottles were taken up to Laura, who was sitting in the drawing-room thinking of Ronald. She, in turn, went up to her uncle's bedroom. He was an irritable man always—much more so now. By his side sat his young wife, who was devoted to him. Her face was pretty, with large blue eyes, as Melton said, and a caressing smile.

'Thank you, dear,' she said. 'I think he's asleep.'

'No, he isn't,' said the patient; 'time for medicine. Thought very likely the fresh bottle wouldn't come to-night. Doctors don't much care once they've got you in their hands.'

'I'm sure Ronald does, uncle,' said Laura. 'Oh, don't upset him, poor dear,' said his wife imploringly. 'It isn't time yet, Harry,' she added in soothing tones. 'Your next dose isn't due for twenty minutes.'

'Very well,' said her husband; 'be punctual. I'll try to sleep a bit. Lower that lamp, can't you. I suppose you don't care how my eyes ache, either of you,' he added irritably.

'Yes, dear,' said his wife quietly. 'Is that better? Try to sleep till it's time for the medicine,' she added, arranging his pillows.

'You want a dose yourself,' said Laura sympathetically. 'Why don't you have one? I'll wake you in time. You looked tagged out.'

'Well,' said the little woman doubtfully, 'I do feel rather tired. He's been a little—but, of course, he's so worn, poor dear. Well, I'll try, dear. Come and wake me if I do sleep.'

The time elapsed. Laura went up to the bedroom again. Her aunt was in a light sleep in the armchair, her uncle awake and querulous.

'Flora,' he said, 'are you going to give me that medicine? Nobody seems to attend to me.'

Mrs. Rearley started up, rubbing her eyes and stopping Laura, who was about to say something. Going to the dressing table, she took the bottle, poured out a dose, and gave it to her husband. He gulped it down. Then he started up in bed with a loud exclamation.

'How it burns!' he gasped. 'My throat's blistered! It's the liniment you've given me!'

Mrs. Rearley screamed, and ran to the lamp.

'No, no!' she said; 'here's the direction: "Two tablespoonfuls every four hours."'

Laura looked, too. There was no mistake. She snatched up the other bottle. It was marked 'The Liniment. Poison.' Both were similar in color.

Meanwhile Rearley was gasping and groaning.

'There's some dreadful mistake,' sobbed his wife hysterically. 'Oh, send for doctors, Laura!'

Laura ran downstairs, and dispatched the servants in different directions. All was dismay.

II.

Presently Doctor Philipson, an older man than Melton, arrived. The latter could not be found. He had been at the

'Royal Arms' with a friend. Laura heard, with a pang at her heart. The other doctor shook his head.

'We'll try antidotes,' he said; 'but—'

And he set to work.

But the patient rapidly grew worse; and after some time of intense suffering, Rearley died, to the frantic grief of his wife and niece.

Just after this Ronald Melton hurried in. He was equally startled and astonished.

'I don't understand it,' he said confusedly.

To say the truth, in variance with his constant habit, he had been, at Lyde's press invitation, having some champagne while listening to his stories, and then the latter's roving propensities had induced the young doctor to accompany him for a walk under the moon, Ronald being pretty sure he had no pressing case that night.

'Well,' said the other doctor, 'it's pretty plain, my dear fellow, I'm afraid; for once you didn't think what you were doing and put the wrong labels on.' This was in a low tone, and with professional sympathy.

'Had you anything to distract your attention?'

'No—well—Lyde was talking to me at the time,' replied Ronald dolefully.

'Ah!—that accounts for it. These things will occur sometimes. We must make the best of it all at the inquest,' said Philipson, who liked Melton.

'But I'm positive I made no mistake,' said Ronald gloomily.

'Ah, my dear fellow, all of us do sometimes. Well, I must go now, for I expect a call, and I won't disturb them,' looking at the mourners.

Melton walked up to the bed and looked at the dead man with thoughts too bewildered for words. Mrs. Rearley glanced at him through her tears.

'Oh, go away, do Doctor Melton!' she said hysterically. 'I don't want to be unkind—but how can I look at you after such a thing as this?'

'Laura,' said the young man in tremulous tones, touching the kneeling girl, 'I wish you would believe I'd rather have died myself than this should have happened. Won't you believe me?'

'Oh, Ronald!' moaned the girl, 'what can I believe? It is too dreadful!—and though he was abrupt in his manner he was always kind to me.' And she sobbed bitterly.

Perplexed, woe-begone, and noting the averted looks of the servants, Ronald dejectedly left the house and sought his own. There he found a message from a patient requiring his attendance.

When he returned the next day, having been detained for hours, he called at the 'Royal Arms'. But Lyde had left for London by the first train, and had left a message that he would write.

The inquest followed. The facts having been stated, and the medical evidence given by Doctor Philipson, the coroner asked the boy Jim if he delivered the bottles untouched at Mr. Rearley's.

'Course I did,' said Jim, with injured dignity, 'just as they was wrapped up by the doctor.'

'Did you see the doctor put the labels on?'

'Yes, I did,' said Jim, 'so did Mr. Lyde.'

'But where were you?'

'Just inside the door. Mr. Lyde he was close to the doctor.'

'Ah, then he'd know much more than you,' said the coroner. 'Is Mr. Lyde here?'

And he looked round the court.

'No, he is not,' said Ronald. He has left the 'Royal Arms' for London; where he is now I don't know.'

'That's unfortunate,' said the coroner drily. 'Well, Doctor Melton, do you wish to make any statement?'

'Only that I'm positive I put the correct labels on the bottles.'

'But you were talking to this Mr. Lyde—and, I'm informed, went to the hotel and had some refreshment with him.'

'Yes, that is correct,' said Ronald.

'Ah!' said the jury sotto voce, and the spectators looked knowingly at each other.

The coroner briefly summed up. The jury retired for a space, then returned and gave their verdict: 'That the deceased died from taking a poisonous liniment in place of medicine, owing to the mistake made in the labelling of the bottles by D. C. or Melton.'

The young doctor turned very pale.

'It is a most unjust verdict,' he said.

III.

Ronald Melton soon found what the verdict meant. His patients left him. He was looked at askance, and his acquaintances became very short-sighted whenever they saw him. He fought against popular opinion, and having a very small private income, but sufficient for his needs, lived on in Battersley with one old servant. His horse and dog cart he sold. He had little need for either, and devoted himself to scientific study.

The engagement between him and Laura was broken off. She was willing to keep her promise, but he was too proud to allow her to do so, for he could see a certain change in her manner. Also she inherited half of Harry Rearley's money, the other half and the house going to his widow, who could not bear the sight of Melton. Laura lived with her becoming, indeed, almost necessary to her. She made frequent excursions abroad, hoping that the effect of the shock would lessen.

Over and over again Ronald puzzled his brain as to the enigma of the tragedy. He had sometimes a dreadful doubt whether he might not, listening to Lyde's incessant stories and jokes, have mechanically put the wrong labels on. And it was with much warmth that he welcomed his old fellow student when one day he suddenly reappeared, having come this time from Australia.

He heard all the story with much astonishment, but it was cold comfort to Ronald when he gave his opinion in answer to his request.

'Well, if I'd been at the inquest I couldn't have said I was sure; you know we'd had a glass of sherry in your dining room, and

you were a bit excited over my yarns. However, why stay here? Come to London. I'll find the money for a practice.'

'No,' said Ronald. 'A man's reputation damaged in our profession isn't easily repaired. Besides—though we shall never marry I sometimes see Laura!—and he bid his face, while Lyde looked out of the window.'

But some days later the mystery was explained. Mrs. Rearley met with a carriage accident, being seriously injured. The horse had overturned the basket carriage, and though Laura Melton was unhurt, her aunt sustained external, as well as internal injuries. Philipson attended, but pronounced no opinion, his silence in itself eloquent.

But she herself was aware of the truth. 'I am dying,' she said quietly to the horror-stricken Laura. 'Philipson knows it. But there's something I must say. Send for Ronald Melton.'

Laura was violently agitated with mingled emotions.

'For him?' she gasped.

The other nodded silently.

So presently Ronald, Laura, Philipson, and the hospital nurse were round the dying woman's bed.

'I owe you this,' she murmured, looking fixedly at Ronald. 'You were ruined but my husband was poisoned by my fault. I changed the labels. He was a tyrant, and I had long—'

And here she stopped, and never spoke more.

'Oh, Ronald, can you forgive me?' said Laura. The reply was satisfactory, and Doctor Melton became a leading practitioner in the town, which did all it could to compensate for the past.

Will Pluck Handfuls Then.

Patience—Did you ever get a lock of Will's hair?

Patience—Oh, no. We're not married yet, you know!

BORN.

Oxford, June 24 to the wife of W. Slade, a daughter.

Gloucester, June 23, to the wife of James Lamey, a son.

Shelburne, June 23, to the wife of Howland White, a son.

Waltham, June 25, to the wife of James Chandler, a son.

Montreal, June 27, to the wife of J. M. McConnell, a son.

Shelburne, June 22, to the wife of Wm. Swanson, a son.

Concord, June 18, to the wife of F. Rolfe, a son.

Lunenburg, June 10, to the wife of Wm. Fong, a son.

Grand View, June 11, to the wife of Rev. Keirstead, a son.

Kenilworth, June 25, to the wife of F. W. Steadman, a son.

Amherst, June 26, to the wife of G. J. McLean, a son.

Cumbridge, June 25, to the wife of C. R. Hayward, a son.

Lunenburg, June 27, to the wife of Geo. Winter, a son.

Montreal, June 21, to the wife of D. McLaughan, a son.

Yarmouth, June 27, to the wife of Ira L. Porter, a son.

Smith's Cove, June 17, to the wife of R. Co sett, a son.

Westport, June 26, to the wife of Evan Frost, a son.

Shelburne, June 26, to the wife of Kinsman Gobece, a son.

Richmond, May 23, to the wife of Samuel Grant, a son.

Hall's, June 30, to the wife of Major J. Long, a son.

Spring Hill, June 24, to the wife of James O'Brien, a son.

Middleton, June 27, to the wife of H. E. Reed, a son.

Coburn Road, June 24, to the wife of S. S. Shatford, a daughter.

North River, June 19, to the wife of Robert Nelson, a daughter.

Shet Harbor, June 6, to the wife of R. McNairn, a daughter.

Lunenburg, June 21, to the wife of Gilbert Randall, a daughter.

La Ve, June 15, to the wife of Angus Hone, a daughter.

La Ve, June 26, to the wife of Wm. Clarence, a daughter.

Bridgeport, June 20, to the wife of Reuben Oikle, a daughter.

Day Spring, June 19, to the wife of Freeman Conrad, a daughter.

Westville, June 20, to the wife of R. H. McKay, a daughter.

Boulter, June 10, to the wife of R. McLeod, a daughter.

Syd. Mines, June 27, to the wife of Jas. Cunn, a daughter.

Amherst, June 23, to the wife of George Cooke, a daughter.

Lunenburg, June 14, to the wife of A. Schare, a daughter.

Tusker, June 26, to the wife of R. Jacquard, a daughter.

Halifax, June 25, to the wife of John McInnis, a daughter.

Hawkesbury, June 23, to the wife of J. McVicar, twin daughters.

MARRIED.

Yarmouth, June 14 by Rev. C. Wilson, Percy Bain to Lottie Foote.

Truro, June 28, by Rev. H. F. Waring, Mr. E. P. Elliot to Mrs. Hay.

Milford, June 20 by Rev. A. B. Dickie, R. Mitchell to Hattie Wardro.

Goldboro, June 20, by Rev. W. J. Rallegde, Lois Giffen to John Giffen.

Halifax, June 22, by Rev. Wm. Ainley, Clement Hills to Martha Spears.

West Caledonia, June 31, by Rev. F. Egan, Wm. Camm to Eunice White.

Port Maria, June 29, by Rev. Wm. Grant, Mr. Jessott to Mrs. Marshall.

Lunenburg, June 24, by Rev. Wm. McCree, Howard Couse to Mary Wenzell.

Fairville, June 28, by Rev. A. S. Morton, Gary Black to Jennie Campbell.

Gay River, June 22, by Rev. A. B. Dickie, Hugh Dunlop to Alice Giffen.

Maine, June 23, by Rev. J. S. Durkee, Rev. F. S. Hartley, to Laura Pulsifer.

Lunenburg, June 7, by Rev. Jacob Masner, Arthur F. Crouse to Estella Cook.

St. John June 28, by Rev. J. A. Gordon, W. L. Long to Miss S. F. Chow.

Windsor, June 21, by Rev. Wm. Phillips, John L. Olive to Louise H. Roberts.

Somerville, June 25, by Rev. Wm. Murray, Harry Earl to Jennie Moses.

Caledonia, Q. C., June 21, by Rev. W. Outerbridge, Alex. Smith to Annie Teller.

St. John, June 29, by Rev. J. W. Clarke, Robert C. Combs to Nora M. Bontiller.

Halifax, June 27, by Rev. D. Hearis, John N. Combs to Nora M. Bontiller.

Great Village, June 28, by Rev. Jas. McLean, Alex. D. Gunn to Jane M. Spencer.

St. John, June 28, by Rev. A. T. Dikeman, Chas. Dikeman to Jennie Hamilton.

Guyboro, June 24, by Rev. W. Croft, Wm. D. Atkins to Annie S. McDonald.

Tatamagouche, June 28, by Rev. T. Sedgewick, Elias Major to May Murdoch.

Guyboro, June 27, by Rev. R. Morse, Harry Sparks to Mrs. Sarah Sparks.

Chatham, June 28, by Rev. D. Henderson, Wm. C. Murray to Mabel Johnston.

North Brookfield, June 18, by Rev. H. B. Smith, Robert Smith to Flora Brown.

River Herbert, June 26, by Rev. J. M. Parker, Joseph Greer to Maria Collins.

Guyboro, June 24, by Rev. W. Croft, John V. Williams to Blanche Jamieson.

Mass. ck, June 24, by Rev. W. Phillip, Otadiah Hawkins to Mrs. M. Bachman.

Wendell Lake, June 17, by Rev. L. McCreery, Arthur Crooks to Eva Meiner.

Mahoe Bar, June 23, by Rev. J. W. Crawford, Phillip Ralston to Jessie Holmes.

Black River, June 28, by Rev. T. G. Johnstone, Clement Dickson to Laura Fowlie.

Pugwash, June 24, by Rev. C. H. Haverstock, Windsor, June 27, by Rev. Canon Maynard, Fred Handcomb to Nellie S. Farnham.

Alexandria, P. E. Isd., June 27, by Rev. J. C. Spurr, Charles T. Shipley to Annie M. Wood.

St. John, June 28, by Revs. Ety and Palmer, Robert Palmer to Annie Hans packer.

DIED.

Digby, Lydia Bailey 3.

Pictou, Wm. Murray 66.

Digby, June 18 Lizzie Dunn 25.

Windsor, June 19 Mary Millett 6.

Hants, June 29, Alex. Cochran 77.

Digby, June 18 Luc M. Comeau 85.

Halifax, June 19, Henry J. Fry 4.

Yarmouth, June 26, Jesse Greene 2.

Pictou, June 23, John McDonald 61.

Moncton, June 27, Bertha G. Hains 2.

Bathurst, June 27, Geo. S. Clu chie 63.

Halifax, June 29, Mary Ann Valentine.

St. John, June 28, Oscar Mercheand 27.

Wickham, Queens Co., June 10, Russell.

St. John, June 27, William J. Peman 35.

Boothbay, Mass., R. Howard McGill 22.

Cambridge, Mass., June 25, A. S. Corey.

Moncton, June 28, Murray H. McLeod 6.

Parabola, June 21, Alfred MacAloay 42.

Woburn, Mass., June 21, Emma Chard 30.

Yarmouth, June 25, Thomas W. Curry 77.

Moncton, June 27, Mr. Alphonse Gaudin 56.

Annapolis, June 27, Alexander D. Hewas.

Canton, Mass., June 27, Roger P. Jones 30.

Halifax, June 29, Conductor Rutherford 65.

North East Point, June 23, Doro Smith 58.

Mobile Alabama, June 4, John J. Walsh 84.

Summersville, June 21, Mrs. Mary Young 82.

B. Mount June 26, Mrs. Thomas Barnhill 90.

Dartmouth, June 30, Bernard J. O'Hara 32.

New York, June 22, Mrs. Sarah A. Smith 84.

Tusket Wedge, June 25, Zich rie LeBlanc 27.

Lynn, Mass., June 24, James W. E. Driggs 60.

Springhill, June 26, Annie M. Wright 2 months.

Boston Highlands, June 16, Samuel Cameron 78.

Lower Woods Harbor, June 25, Esther Smith 20.