

LAUGHING INTO INSANITY.

What Followed the Extraction of Nineteen Teeth.

A Swedish Girl Takes Nitrous Oxide and Subsequently Exhibits Symptoms of Dementia—Removed to a Hospital, She Creates Excitement Among the Inmates—A Strait-Jacket Required to Subdue Her.

[New York Mercury.]

People familiar with the facts have been, during the past week, greatly agitated concerning the case of Miss Hannah Deal, a young Swedish lady residing in the family of Mr. Mead, on West Fifty-sixth street, who, after undergoing a dental operation under the influence of nitrous oxide, or laughing gas, went crazy, and afterward became a raving maniac. This result is the occasion of greater surprise because, while the use of anaesthetics, such as ether and chloroform, has always been supposed to be attended with more or less danger, the inhalation of laughing gas was supposed to be harmless. It is claimed by the Colton Dental association that 190,000 people have had their teeth extracted while under the influence of that anesthetic, suffering no pain nor any subsequent evil effects. Miss Deal has been in the employ of Mrs. F. Mead for five years, and by her lady-like manners and general efficiency endeared herself to her mistress. She has had, it is stated,

A ROMANTIC HISTORY

in her native country, Sweden, and when she came here she ran away from trouble, and endeavored to leave trouble behind her, also. She is of small stature, with golden hair, large, expressive blue eyes, and of general attractive appearance. Her teeth have troubled her for some time past, and two years ago she had the stumps of 10 teeth extracted. At that time she endured the pain without calling to her aid any gas or other emollient, and she suffered so greatly from the operation that she declared that she would not have another tooth pulled without an anesthetic. Her teeth were rotting,

out an anesthetic. Her teeth were rotting, and she suffered greatly with toothache of late. It kept her awake nights, and she became nervous and unfitted for work. Finally her mistress told her she had better have the teeth removed. She reiterated her statement about the use of some article that would kill the pain, and finally Mrs. Mead told her if she was determined in the matter she had better go to the Colton Dental Institute and take laughing gas. On Wednesday, May 19, Mrs. Mead accompanied Hannah to the Cooper Institute, and an examination was made of her mouth by Dr. Colton and his partner, Dr. L. M. Slocum. The latter said that

NINETEEN TEETH WOULD HAVE TO BE DRAWN before she would be in condition to have false teeth fitted and inserted. Miss Deal was asked whether she was ready to undergo the operation. She declared she was, and she took possession of the patient's chair. Dr. Slocum administered the gas. She at once gave evidence of being under its influence, and the doctor began the work of extraction. Only nine teeth had been drawn when Hannah came to sensibility and gave evidence of pain, and the gas was again given. Then the other 10 teeth were pulled, and Miss Deal soon gave evidence of consciousness. She did not appear excited or unpleasantly affected by the gas; on the contrary, she was much calmer than most people under similar circumstances. But when she got into the street she began to act queerly. As she had passed through the hallway and down the steps of the institute she seemed to be in a trance, and not yet recovered from the stupor of the operation; but after they had walked a short distance she began to

LAUGH AND SING.

Her mistress looked at her in astonishment, as she was exciting attention, and requested her to be quiet. But she laughed all the more, and by the time they had reached the house became quite hysterical. Her peals of laughter rang through the house, attracting the attention of all the inmates. She laughed and was greatly agitated with her mirth, which seemed to be of a very forced and unnatural kind, as it did not cease when every one else looked serious and tried to check her, but rolled on in cachinnation which soon became painful to listen to. They coaxed, scolded, upbraided, threatened, pitied and compassionated by turns. All to no effect. She kept on laughing until bed-time. Then the reaction came. She began to talk of spirits. "Do you see

THAT ANGEL UP THERE?"

she inquired; "why, the air is full of them. There are spirits everywhere. The room can not hold them all. My own spirit is there floating near the ceiling. Blessed

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she inquired; "why, the air is full of them. There are spirits everywhere. The room can not hold them all. My own spirit is there floating near the ceiling. Blessed spirits! Don't you see them? They are coming down to bear me up. Now I am rising; up, up, higher, higher. O! its lovely here. I'm soaring away, away with angel body guards."

Suddenly she gave a shriek which was heard throughout the block then she exclaimed: "I'm falling, catch me; the angels are flying away." Her countenance underwent a remarkable transformation. The jubilant and happy creature was suddenly changed into a woman of demoniac passion. She scowled and shouted and swore, tearing her hair and becoming uncontrollable. She began to tear her clothes from her body. She seized a pitcher and hurled it across the room; a chair soon followed it, then a handsome vase was dashed to atoms on the floor. She caught sight of herself in a mirror. It was enough to appall her, for the woman that met her gaze was wild of eye, raging with fever and crazed with excitement. She pushed her hand through the glass, battering it in fragments. It was evident the woman was a lunatic, and efforts were made to restrain her. It required the united efforts of all the members of the family and of the servants to keep her from leaping out of the windows. Aid was called for and the family physician was summoned. He said the

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and must be admitted to an asylum. This the family would not listen to. The doctor declared she was unsafe, and that for her to remain in the house would jeopardize her life and the lives of all the inmates. Then they looked about them to see what disposition could be made of her. They did not want her to be committed to Blackwell's island or any other asylum. Finally they consulted a clergyman, and, through his influence, they obtained entrance for her in the Presbyterian Hospital at Seventeenth street and Madison avenue. She was taken there in a carriage on the afternoon of Friday. It took two strong men to restrain her violence on the way. She endeavored at times to choke herself and her custodians. As she was conducted into the hospital the attendants and inmates of that institution looked in wonderment at the shrieking, struggling woman, who made the neighborhood resound with her cries. They were surprised, because it had been generally understood that no insane or violent person was permitted by the charter of the institution to become an inmate, and that insane persons were specially mentioned as being debarred from its privileges. Miss Deal was conducted to one of the wards, and for a little while became quite subdued; but, when rest had fallen upon the place and most of the inmates were asleep, she suddenly leaped from her bed, and gave vent

to the most unearthly sounds, and began tearing

THE RED CLOTHING TO PIECES.

She was seized with a perfect paroxysm of excitement, and dashed to the ground everything within her reach. She ran up and down the room, and finally shot out of the door and into another apartment, where she awakened the inmates by her cries and violent conduct. She seemed imbued with superhuman strength, and fought like a wild beast at bay the attendants who had been called to restrain her. It was a novel sight in that unusually quiet hospital to see this maniac setting at defiance strong men who tried to quiet her, keeping the place in an uproar. The physicians ordered her to be held quiet while they bared her arm, and the night nurses had great difficulty in doing so as hyperdermic injections of morphia were inserted, and had it not been for the presence of mind and strong will of a little woman, who said to her in determined tones: "Shut up, or I will strap you," it is doubtful whether the opiate could have been administered. Sleep was finally superinduced by the soporific. As soon as its effect was over, however, she became violent as before, and a

STRAIT-JACKET WAS PUT UPON HER.

This kept her from doing further injury. The excited state of the woman's mind however, continued, and there was the same tendency to violence exhibited on the following day. Opiates and medicines of a quieting nature were administered and although she was still kept in a strait-jacket yesterday she had become more tractable and had lucid intervals. She knew Mrs. Mead when the latter called upon and expressed her great affection for her.

WHAT THE CHIEF SURGEON SAYS.

The chief surgeon at the hospital said in conversation with the writer that the case was one of acute insanity or dementia. He thought the woman might recover with good care and treatment. He explained the anaesthetics upon the human system lucidly. He said that ether and chloroform act as a sedative upon the system, reducing the circulation, decreasing the vitality, and producing coma; the minimum of vitality is reached; hence it is dangerous where one has heart troubles to administer that which would tend to decrease the heart throbs, respiration or pulsation. "These anaesthetics depress, retard and diminish life. Nitrous oxide, or 'laughing gas,' as it is popularly called, on the other hand, exhilarates, vitalizes, excites, increasing the circulation of the blood and respiration. The forces of life are set at a gallop. Insensibility to pain is created by exhilaration. The patient is intoxicated with oxygen. It is that element of the atmosphere called by some ozone, which on balmy days makes people buoyant, robust, active, exhilarated, is poured into the lungs, and without which no life could exist. This was the effect pro-

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DR. S. M. SLOCUM.

then being called upon, said he recollected administering the gas to Miss Deal, in the presence of Mrs. Mead and Dr. Colton. He was compelled to give it to the lady twice before all the teeth had been extracted. She did not appear to be excited after the affair was over; on the contrary, she was exceedingly quiet and taciturn. The gas worked to a charm in her case, and he had never seen it operate better. He said that the effect of nitrous oxide on the system was just opposite to chloroform, ether and other anaesthetics, and admitted that it exhilarated immeasurably. He had never before heard of any injurious effects resulting, and said that when Dr. Colton returned from Boston they would investigate the matter. He could not understand it. He admitted that in persons of very excitable temperament the gas might make them wild and excitable for a time, but he did not think the effects would be lasting, or that insanity would follow. He was much interested in this new development, and would watch the case with a great deal of interest. The friends of the afflicted woman are exceedingly anxious about her, and are interested in her behalf, and say they will spare no care or expense to have her reason restored.