

## Some Practical Makeshifts in Nursing.

On a day many years since, I was reading with a Ward Sister a clever graphological character delineation of a partially-trained nurse whom we both knew. Placing her finger on one paragraph the Sister—who, by the way, was an ardent Registrationist—said, thoughtfully, “Really and truly, that one quality alone equals years of training.” The paragraph ran:—“She is one of those happy people who can always see exactly what wants doing, and how it should be done. She is never at a loss in an emergency.”

Often in later years that incident recurred to my mind. Though no intuition can balance ignorance of the alphabet of nursing, for my part, I am disposed to attach to the A, B, and C of that alphabet factors not always regarded as predominant; and of these resourcefulness stands first, because it comprehends so many other needful qualities—namely, invincible determination, perseverance, intuition, self-reliance, earnestness, and a logical brain. There can be few callings that demand such readiness and fertility of resource, such fine, rapid, accurate perceptions of the possibilities of a situation as are required in private nursing, especially nursing in poor and small homes. In hospital, organisation provides against all probable contingencies. In wealthy homes money will supply every need, and cancel difficulty or distance. But every private nurse can recall cases in poor homes where the limitations of the available appliances for nursing gave her at the outset a momentary sense of shock at the barrenness and apparent hopelessness of the situation, a sense which rapidly yielded to her ability to make shift. In such homes the welfare of the patient and the comfort of the household are dependent to an enormous extent on the scope of the nurse's powers in this direction. The quality of resource, which is closely allied to inventive faculty, must be to some extent inborn, but it may be largely increased by cultivation. Nowadays life is made so smooth for children, and so much in the way of adjusted material is provided for their use, that innate resourcefulness seems likely in many cases to remain latent. All those I know who have this quality in a marked degree are members of large families, brought up in a somewhat rough-and-tumble fashion, and were, as children, dependent on their own ingenuity for the success of their amusements, and the achievement of their desires.

In my own nursing experience, I found that

the type of household which most demands the exercise of makeshift is the cottage, or the little suburban villa home—especially when the mistress is the patient. In the latter case the young maid, if there is one, is usually unable to cook anything at all, and one generally finds appalling omissions in the furnishing of kitchen and pantry. The kitchen fire and oven are erratic and unreliable, and, unless Nurse comes to the rescue, the patient's food will be far other than it should be; and she can only give partial attention to the kitchen. Perhaps the first desirability in these circumstances is a double saucepan, in which liquid foods may be cooked without risk of spoiling. This is seldom at hand, but an excellent substitute is an earthenware jampot, closely covered by a small plate, or parchment cover, and placed in a saucepan containing boiling water. Excepting custards and soufflés, food cooked in this way does not suffer by being left half an hour too long, and for all milk foods, cereals, beef tea, chicken, fish, and light vegetables it is a satisfactory method of cooking, all that is required being that the water shall be kept near boiling point. What nurse cannot recall the disappointing results of the little “general's” attempt to cook potatoes; one day hard and waxy, the next inseparable from the water in which they were boiled? A very simple arrangement in the absence of a steamer will obviate all uncertainty in the process. Place the unpared potatoes within the inverted lid of the saucepan. Over them put a square of gauze or muslin, and tie the corners in the manner of a pudding-cloth firmly across the top of the lid, which should then be put on the saucepan half-filled with boiling water. This method will supply perfectly-cooked potatoes, even if not taken out directly they are ready. The drying may be accomplished by pouring away the water, and leaving the lid raised for a few minutes.

The cooking of white fish may be most successfully done in a small, strong biscuit tin, one which has held Plasmon biscuits is the best kind. Line it with buttered grease-proof paper, place in it the fish, close the lid firmly, and put the box in the oven, or on the kitchen range for about fifteen minutes. I have found the top of a “Perfection” oil-heating stove the best place of all for this way of cooking. The fish remains moist, retains all nourishment, and is not liable to burn if neglected. Portions of chicken, etc., may be cooked in the same way. If the cooking be done on an open oil stove, the biscuit box should, without its lid, be placed in another larger box on two or three small

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