

Hourly Nursing for People of Limited Incomes, and for those in Hotels or Small Apartments.*

BY GRACE NORMAN.

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THIS Baptist minister surely did not live up to the tenets of his religion, unless he considered his one baptism sufficiently cleansing to soul and body for a lifetime. After listening to his conversation that afternoon, I could think of few worse punishments than that of having to listen to him preach. Some of the portraits that he was doing were of people whom I had known in my old home. I therefore wrote to find out what reputation they had borne while there, and if they were worthy of more help than the relief of their present necessities. The first day I cut and cleaned sixty finger-nails and ten toe-nails, all of which I found in the deepest of mourning.

They certainly looked better with clean skins and smoothed hair, although so pale.

They declared that they could not stand a window open even two inches (in May), but while I visited them I induced them to take it as a dose of medicine, half an hour each day, and they all huddled together under bed-clothes on a lounge during the process. I tried to induce the oldest girl to comb her hair, but never succeeded, nor would she learn to bathe the baby, but sat reading the morning paper (an extravagance that I couldn't afford), and when I suggested her watching me, she merely looked up and remarked in a very indifferent way, "I don't like the job," and resumed her reading.

Those who had known them considered them human parasites, and said that helping them was merely pauperizing them. It seemed useless to spend any more time with impostors, so I devoted the time to some who would be benefited by my efforts.

A nurse just leaving the hospital would probably receive some very severe shocks in doing this work.

For instance, her germ theory, in which she believes as firmly as in earlier days she believed in Santa Claus, she will lose some faith in after having a case like the following:

A woman who had ten children, and a husband who was dying of consumption, lived in three rear tenement rooms, two of which were mere dark closets, and here fed, clothed, and sheltered, twelve persons on \$8.75 per week, and they were always a happy and cheerful family.

She had a miscarriage, and three days afterward one of her children was run over and cut and bruised and his ankle broken, and of course there was no such thing as keeping her in bed. A severe inflammation ensued, and she was curreted

after two weeks. She collapsed again, however, and was operated on in her own room amid disease germs and those equally bold and more visible things which make the darkness felt.

A five-inch median incision was made in the abdominal wall, through which a fallopian tube and large cystic tumour were removed. While she was still very ill, for the wound had no "first intention" of healing, her husband died, and both the corpse and the surgical case lay day and night, in midsummer, in one large (?) room, ten feet square, which was kitchen and living-room for the whole family.

To see that casket lifted down beside the mother's cot for her last look surrounded by the ten weeping children, the oldest of whom was fourteen, and to think by what a mere thread this noble mother's life hung, would have moved the strongest heart. She, however, recovered, and is again caring for her family with a serenity and cheerful philosophy which surely does far more for the poor than medicine.

On some of the very warm days we had in June, '97, I visited those who had every comfort that money could buy, and they would be fretting about the "dreadfully hot day" it was "going to be;" wonder how they could live through it (with electric fans and every comfort) and wish me an easy day; but when I reached this rear tenement, where the broiling sun poured down in the doorway, and no breeze reached them, I was met with "Nice day, nurse," by the group at the entrance. So the serenity of the poor is counterbalanced by the fretfulness of the rich, and we gladly turn to the poor when in need of consolation not to be supplied by material things.

The tales of woe, as well as those of joy, could be multiplied indefinitely, but would make you weary and impatient if you are not already.

In the first ten weeks of my work last summer, I had fifteen obstetrical cases, all of whom recovered in the proverbial nine days, even if I delivered, as I had to when the doctor couldn't find them, except one whose temperature was 106° twenty-four hours after delivery before I heard of her. I did not feel that I could give her as much attention as she needed and she was transferred two days later to the hospital, where she could have more care, as I then had three other patients far from her. I am so glad that we shall always have the poor with us, for without them many of us would grow hard and selfish, and judging others by myself, we nurses need to come in close contact sometimes with such keen sufferings to teach us to think of our "patients" as such rather than merely as "cases."

Many people whose means are unlimited and accommodations ample for any number of nurses call on hourly nurses for surgical dressings, baths, enemata, and various emergencies and luxuries

* Read at Nurses' Educational Exhibit, New York City

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