

Nursing Echoes.

* * * All communications must be duly authenticated with name and address, not for publication, but as evidence of good faith, and should be addressed to the Editor, 20, Upper Wimpole Street, W.



Writing in the *Johns Hopkins Nurses' Alumnae Magazine*, Miss Nora K. Holman has some funny tales to tell of district nursing.

"All district nurses," she writes, "come in contact with many odd theories on disease, and hear from their patients stories of remarkable cures by means of strange remedies. It is not only the foreigner with

his prejudices, or the negro with his superstitions, who impresses us. Our own Americans surprise us often by their peculiar methods of caring for the sick. One old woman with paralysis had a basin of water placed under her bed as a preventive of bed-sores. Many families have much faith in the same arrangement for reducing temperatures. Could a nurse disturb the basin and the faith, in cases where real nursing care was found necessary to be given? As our study of hydrotherapy does not justify this detached water treatment, we naturally suggested that the same basin beside the bed, used for bathing purposes, would be of more comfort to the patient.

"Onions are much used as remedial agents among the district people in cases of fever. We know that they have a certain diaphoretic action, but it is a little disconcerting to find a pneumonia or typhoid patient almost surrounded by fried onions, firmly bound on head, neck, and wrists and in the foot of each stocking. Coal oil and salt herring applied to the feet to reduce temperature, and cranberry sauce spread directly on the affected area in cases of erysipelas, are two treatments familiar to the district nurse. Beefsteak is a popular remedy for abdominal pain. It is well heated before being applied.

"Most amusing are the coloured patients with their solemn suggestions and intense interest in each other's afflictions. An old coloured woman who had what she called a 'blisterified' leg ulcer was given this advice by her daughter: 'Fo' de Lawd's sake, maw, don' yo' tech dat leg wif yo' firs' finger. Everyone know dat de firs' finger is rank pizen. Take yo' secon' finger.' Another darkey's fancy is that a black chicken, freshly killed, with the feathers still on, will, if laid on the abdomen, relieve the most acute pain. The pow-wow woman, who renders first aid to the injured by

'taking the fire out of burns' by her incantations, is a German, and is in great demand.

"Patients' beds are a constant source of wonder to us. They seem to have a predisposition to fall at most critical moments, and the variety of things one finds in them is appalling. In cases where the father or mother is ill, and the children are troublesome, there is always a large stick or strap under the pillow. Clothing, dressings, the pocket book, the family comb, the watch, bank and insurance books, and various kinds of food come into evidence when the nurse seeks to arrange the pillows. On one occasion the husband's bed had become so littered with rubbish that the wife was discovered hastily sweeping it out with the kitchen broom.

"Some patients spend much time poring over doctors' prescriptions. Others tell by the smell of the medicine what is ordered. Neighbours are called in to consult and usually it is decided that *hartshorn* is given in heart disease, and *ammonia* in pneumonia. It is sometimes difficult to regulate the diet for the patients. Babies usually eat the same food as their fathers, and when sickness comes no change is made. In one case a very ill baby was being given bottled beer. We asked if it had had no milk, and the father answered, 'No, indeed, Miss—at least, not as I knows on, Miss,' in a tone meant to imply that milk was a food to be avoided.

"One of our district houses had for an occupant of the second storey a cow, the owner and family living on the ground floor. This may sound fanciful, or at least seem more descriptive of cottages in Ireland, where small animals are received into the home, but it was actually true of a Baltimore house, until the police arranged otherwise. We know of another house, the kitchen of which afforded warmth last winter for seven black cats, all fully grown, a dog and a lame chicken. Two of the cats slept on the mantelshef most of the time.

"Another peculiarity of the district people is the amazing interest they take in the doings of society. In one house where the nurse made daily visits, sensational tales of the fashionable world were always read aloud for her delectation. And the household treasures in the district homes! The photograph album and the enlarged portraits sink into insignificance before things of more unusual interest. One family possessed two huge, old German clocks, which were particularly attractive. One of these had been built after the design of the famous Strasburg clock, and the miniature figures of Christ and the Disciples moved jerkily across a small stage while the cock from his window crowed. The other played twelve tunes, and twelve dancing puppets kept very bad time. In another house a cuckoo clock bereft of hands presented an absurd

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