

A District Nurse's Day.

By MACK ALL.

"Good morning, Miss, we is very pleased to see you, for Mine says as how that ointment you put on his foot has been heatin' hinto it all night."

This is the greeting received from the wife of the first patient visited. She is an old woman with an unwashed face, and chronic bronchitis. The man is more diplomatic.

"Hevery one has not the same kind of flesh," he remarks, "and what suits my foot may be another's poison as the sayin' is; it has just been goin' like this since yesterday," and he traces a spiral staircase in the air.

The foot is redressed and left comfortable, and the old woman, with a shawl round her neck and a hand before her mouth, opens the door just wide enough for one to squeeze through. She has a horror of undiluted fresh air.

The next patient has had rheumatism. He is recovering, and wants a smoke above everything.

"I have been countin' as I lie here what it has cost me for baccy in the last fifty years," he says, "and if I had it all now I would have three hundred pounds."

One is duly impressed.

"Just think of the comforts that would buy." And one begins to enumerate them.

"I don't grudge it for the baccy," he says resignedly, looking towards his old wife. "I am not a grumblin' sort, and many a day my pipe has been meat and drink. The parish allows us 10s. a week, and with that and the help of a lady up the hill we manage all right, eh, old woman?"

But the wife is the grumbling sort, and she has not had the satisfaction of turning three hundred pounds into smoke, so she only grunts and remarks to the nurse that "men are all alike."

He is left happy with an old pipe and a plug of tobacco for company.

A patient in the next street receives a short visit. She is bedridden from partial paralysis.

"I don't 'old with all this washin'," she grumbles; and although she allows clean clothing to be put on sometimes, she always has it removed as soon as the Nurse's back is turned, and the dirty things put on again. "Clean clothes are so weakenin'," she says.

These first patients are quick cases, and can be dispatched in a short time, but the remainder take longer, and are more trying to nerve as well as body. One is the mother of a large family, and cannot be visited until the youn-

ger children have gone to school. She has been discharged from hospital as incurable. Her one desire is to be allowed to die at home. She has a medical man who has seen her through many dark days, and who is most attentive and kind, but she needs the services of a trained Nurse. If it were not for the District Nurse she would have had to end her days in an infirmary among strangers, and she hungered for the love and companionship of her husband and children.

Her husband worked overtime to get her little comforts, but he spent every hour that he was not at work in his wife's room.

They were not the very poor; the home was always clean and bright; and the patient suffered so quietly that one sometimes forgot the agony she bore through long wakeful nights and restless days.

On the morning of which we write there was a change, and before leaving the Nurse bent over and asked if there was anything she could do for the sufferer. The answer was given in a whisper so that the children should not hear.

"Oh, Nurse, please ask God to take me Home soon; this is a sad day for my family."

And next day she gladly passed away from the little home she loved into the Light.

This patient represents the deserving poor. The next belongs to a different class.

He was a small boy whose training school was the gutter.

His father belonged to the class of unemployed who hold concerts in the street, and who are not ashamed to beg.

His mother worked in a factory six days in the week, and spent most of the seventh in bed.

There were six living children—two in a sanatorium, and this boy had a tubercular joint.

When his mother had paid her usual evening visit to the public house she used to dis-course tearfully of the seven children she had "buried."

On Saturday evening and Sunday there would be clothes and crockery in the house, but on Monday morning everything pawnable was taken round the corner.

If the District Nurse could have found anyone to listen she could have given many lessons on hygiene and cleanliness here.

The officer for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children followed the family from tenement to tenement. He did his best with the hopeless material he had to deal with.

These people belong to the class who need the District Nurse most, and who probably want her least. They are the drunken, thriftless, undeserving poor. There may be hope-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)