

Day and night Kitty worked with the sick and when the doctors were unable to meet the calls she went to them for orders and reported results. She also took charge of the clothes and bedding that were lent to people while their own was being disinfected and washed. She also made a breakfast of porridge for those who otherwise would have had nothing (at one time the number was 60), her husband going to the country for the milk each night after his work.

Kitty's good work did not cease when the cholera disappeared. No one appealed in vain to either Mr. or Mrs. Wilkinson, nor did Kitty ever refuse to go to the sick or dying; at the same time she never forgot her own home and was an exemplary homemaker believing that well cooked food, even if not too abundant, and a clean bright hearth kept people from going to the alehouse.

She encouraged her household to bring their friends to share their fireside and at one time as many as 10 met every evening. Their time was spent as follows: one day games, the next music; then reading aloud; then games again. On Saturday everyone did what pleased himself.

They took three penny magazines and had three teachers from the Mechanics' Institute.

In 1866 Kitty was presented with a silver tea-service. On the teapot was engraved: "The Queen, The Queen-Dowager, and the Ladies of Liverpool to Catherine Wilkinson 1846." The same year the public baths and washhouses in Frederick Street were opened and as a mark of appreciation Mr. and Mrs. Wilkinson were made Superintendents. Her husband died after eight months but Kitty held the post for four years and then as she was old and getting infirm she was given the task of hemming all the towels for some new baths that were being built. She died in 1860 and on her tombstone in St. James Cemetery, Liverpool, is carved:

"Catherine Wilkinson, died 11 November 1860, aged 73. Indefatigable and self-denying. She was the Widow's friend. The support of the Orphan, The fearless and unwearied nurse of the sick. The originator of Baths and Washhouses for the poor."

For they all did cast in of their abundance; but she, of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

Just seven years ago, 11th September, 1925, the Lord Mayor of Liverpool opened the Kitty Wilkinson Public Baths and Washhouses in Gilbert Street to perpetuate her memory as the founder of such Institutions, not only in Liverpool but throughout the country. The new K.W. establishment has accommodation for 40 washers with up-to-date appliances for mechanical wringing, drying and mangling and 12 slipper baths.

The Address on Agnes Jones will appear next month.

WHAT OUR FELLOWS ARE DOING.

A most interesting and useful piece of work is being carried on by Miss Margaret Robertson, F.B.C.N., at Dobyns, 3, Westbrooke, Worthing, who receives children whose parents are abroad, or who for other reasons are unable to have them at home, and gives them the expert care both as to dieting and nursing, as well as a constant affection under which they flourish like flowers in the sun.

Just now there are seven children in Miss Robertson's charge, five of them under a year old and one a baby of a month only. Such a brown, healthy, contented and happy little family. When the weather is fine they are out in the garden safely enclosed in a pen the floor of which is a mackintosh sheet and rug, and if it is too damp for this plan then each child lies in its pram, breathing the balmy air of "sunny Worthing." Fortunate are the babies who grow up at Dobyns, and parents who have the misfortune to be separated from their children must be glad indeed to leave them in such competent care.

PROFESSIONAL REVIEW.

NURSES ON HORSEBACK.*

Those of us who have followed with ever-growing admiration the intrepid pioneer work of Mrs. Mary Breckinridge, and the gallant band of nurses she has gathered round her in the Kentucky Frontier Nursing Service, are always eager for new sidelights upon it, and "Nurses on Horseback," by Ernest Poole, just published, is welcome. Further, it affords proof, were proof needed, that the spirit of enterprise and service animates the nursing profession as of old, and that the flame of self-sacrifice still burns brightly, so that, ignoring hardship and danger, members of our profession are always ready to fill the ranks of the Service, and, indeed, we are told by Mrs. Breckinridge that more applications cannot be considered at present, so much do those already in hand exceed likely vacancies.

Those of us who are honoured by her friendship realise that her love of humanity was bound to find expression in public service, but how came it that the lonely dwellers in the Kentucky mountains attracted her life's devotion?

It happened in this wise. "She comes of one of the oldest and most noted families in the South. Living at first in Virginia, in 1790 they moved to Kentucky. Most of them have lived there ever since upon the soil, but with such living," writes Mr. Poole, "has gone a record of public service nearly as long as our national life. Her great-great-grandfather was attorney-general for Jefferson and her grandfather was vice-president just before the Civil War, and in that war her family was torn apart, with officers in the armies both of the North and of the South. Her father enlisted at fifteen in the Confederate Army and, later, in the navy and he was stationed on the coast. His father in the meantime had served as a major-general and then became Secretary of War for the Confederacy. As such, when the long struggle came to an end, he had to leave the country." Her father at the end of the war, worn by privations, had become a mere skeleton of a boy. Later he went out to Arkansas "and there through many hard, lean years built a new fortune and career. He went to Congress and became Minister to Russia in Grover Cleveland's time. But in his old age he came back to Kentucky, his native State."

His little daughter grew up in Washington and in St. Petersburg, and spent most summers with a great-aunt—a Kentuckian—who lived on a country place near New York and who, since the Civil War, had been spending the larger part of her income establishing schools in the South, where thousands of mountain children were given a good start in life. There, and from the public men who came to her father's house in Washington, "the growing girl heard many discussions of big national questions that affected rural life, and she came to feel that the health and welfare of the people on the soil were vital to the progress of the whole American civilisation." To prepare herself for service she trained as a nurse at St. Luke's Hospital, New York—a few years at home, a brief spell of married life, during which she lost two children, and then to France with Miss Anne Morgan, to work for the French—mainly the children—in the regions devastated by the Great War.

It was in the autumn of 1920 that I first got to know Mrs. Breckinridge. She took me on two golden days from Rheims to Soissons, from Soissons to Courcy le Chateau and Vie, and all the way we halted from time to time at various houses and clinics established by the "Dames Americaines" to bring help and healing to those sorely tried regions. I was deeply impressed with the trust and affection of the people for her, with her sympathetic methods of dealing with them, with the systematic records kept of every case.

* The Macmillan Co., New York.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)