

## AN AMATEUR NURSE'S MISTAKES; OR, "LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP."

A LADY of my acquaintance, well experienced in a sick room, had charge of an invalid who was ordered abroad. A book of health resorts was studied, and a southern locality selected, well suited, as far as climate was concerned, to delicate lungs. But other things than mean temperatures, the hours of average sunshine, amount of rainfall, and prevailing winds, have to be placed in the category of essentials. They were not made a subject of enquiry, and "a leap in the dark" was taken.

*Mistake No. 1.*—An early start was made, —surely the patient would be at her best in the morning? But the unwonted fatigue and mental excitement proved too much. The start should have been delayed till midday, a picnic should have been made in the carriage at one, and the journey broken, that first day, at four. As it was, the patient was completely knocked up, resulting in a severe access of coughing, and she arrived in the evening more dead than alive.

*Mistake No. 2.*—The first and second day's journey should be restricted to four hours each, for then the patient gets "second breath," so to say, and accustomed to the exertion and excitement, which raise the pulse, and result in exhaustion, if not in fever. Arrived at their destination in the South, the climate was charming and Nature was lovely; but at the end of three months the cutting mistral drove the dust like blinding sandstorms of the desert. The patient was a prisoner at home, but the children, who went out, caught terrible coughs, which ended in whooping-cough. And now a new enemy appeared; fever attacked the invalid, and excessive night perspiration; and the English doctor treated the case as hectic fever—as ignorant as the nurse of an existing local cause for any other.

*Mistake No. 3.*—Why was not the fact of periodical prevalence of malarial fever enquired into by those in quest of health resorts, and the swamp discovered which resulted after the heavy rainfall between the town and the sea? Further back, on the more inland and high-lying parts of the town, the influence of the swamp did not seem to be felt. As it was, wrong remedies were for some time employed, to the great injury of the sufferer; and when almost at the point of death, those suitable to the fever, but inimical to the lungs in their condition, brought her round, but at the cost of a grave renewal of cough and spitting of blood.

The month of May arrived, and a removal to Switzerland was desirable. Profiting by former experience, the nurse determined to limit the first day's journey, and to break it at Montelimart. I cannot tell what accommodation that town may now offer to travellers who need beds for a night; in those days they were far from satisfactory. The nurse and patient and two or three little children were ushered into a long suite of apartments—musty, dusty, and closely shuttered. It was clearly useless to enquire when the beds were last occupied. The posting-house of the old diligence days was little in request since the trains roared by, and carried the travellers to a further stage on their way. The nurse shuddered as she thought of a night in such quarters, and groaned over *Mistake No. 4*; but the poor invalid held her peace. The warming-pan was in great request; every shawl and rug was piled over her bed, and closely tucked in. It was devoutly hoped that the bed might be transformed into a monster poultice; but, apart from this, Divine aid was sought, and, to the unspeakable relief of the nurse, the patient appeared no worse in the morning.

On the return of autumn a winter residence was again in request, and a lovely spot was

suggested. Wise so far, the nurse enquired: "Is there any lagoon, or backwater, permanent or periodical, in the near vicinity of this small paradise?" "None whatever," was the reply. The aspect and the climate were unexceptionable; but yet a few more queries suggested themselves to the now more wideawake nurse. "Are there good shops for provisions? Are there comfortable lodgings? Is the drainage satisfactory; and is the place and its *entourage* cheerful? Is the food for the mind catered for, as well as for the body? Or is it a secluded place, where stagnation seems to prevail, and there is nothing to divert the brain from thoughts of self and its daily pains and weariness?" This time, "forewarned" by due reflection, and so "forearmed," the nurse escaped with her charge from the direful results of *Mistake No. 5*.

A further journey was now undertaken, and a large city was selected. Of all climates suitable for pulmonary complaints, Pisa offered one of the best in the world. There were plenty of apartments and shops, a good cheap market, English advice, and English society. All went on fairly well, and the invalid progressed, though slowly, as far as the chest was concerned. But the fever and ague had not been cured, and a bad sore throat was somewhat too severely treated by the kindly English doctor, now long gone. It was not a very encouraging winter, in spite of the balmy air, and the brilliant and glorious skies.

The month of May came round again, and the trunks were packed, and the party *en route*, as before, for Switzerland; and the often-tried patient began to feel as if the chest troubles were gone, and that the faces of the travellers might be turned towards home. But now a sad story must be related. It was thought that a winter in a climate less warm would prepare the lungs for the more trying climate of a northern latitude. Damp was their *bête noir*; and a dry bright climate was sought. Blois was selected, and in a pretty villa, well raised on the outskirts of the town, and overlooking the rapid Loire, the party was established. But oh, the bitterness of the wind when winter set in! And oh, the swirling of great blocks of ice—which looked like breakers on a stormy sea—that day after day swept by with freezing breath, as the half-perished travellers bemoaned their colds and coughs, and the little ones their chilblains. The invalid's bedroom had to be exchanged for the drawing-room, a screen concealing the bed; and the young folks, including the nurse, used to have a playful fight for the privilege of making toast, and of skating about the polished floor, on the well-waxed brushes attached to the polisher's feet. All had them in turn; and never was floor more bright and slippery than that, nor purple figs more deeply darkly blue than the faces of the *blanchisseuses*, when, week by week, they brought in the family linen.

*Mistake No. 7* was truly a great one, for the nurse had taken most evil counsel. Not only was the locality ill-chosen, but the house was not built as a winter residence.

Do not ridicule the inexperience of the nurse, or at least give her credit for the next step taken. Then the month of May again came round, and she took her charge to Paris, and obtained the best opinion on her state, and the course that was next to be followed. The error of staying anywhere away from the South had been a very grave mistake. It was waste of time and money, and might have brought on a relapse. "Go back to Pisa, and, after another winter there, the experiment of a winter spent at home may be made." So spoke the oracle.

This time no *rez de chaussée* was in con-

templation; and provided with a good picnic basket, off the party set once more for the captivating South. Could it be believed? But again *Mistake No. 4* was repeated! The long journey had to be broken; a midway station was noted on the map, and tickets were taken for Langres. They reached the station at dusk—two small children, an infant in arms, four adults, and two maids, a heap of luggage, bundles of rugs and umbrellas, and baskets for provisions, and toys. Landed on the platform, they looked for a town, and seeing no house, they sought for some vehicles wherein to bestow themselves. What was their despair when only a very small diligence stood waiting to receive a number of passengers in addition to themselves. Some kindly men resigned their places to walk, and the children and weakly ones were packed in a heap inside, while the rest of the party hung on as best they could on the top—some on the baggage-load itself!

The moon shone brightly as they wound their way to the top of the hill, where stood the quaint old town, at two leagues' distance. Truly, *Mistake No. 5* was sorely punished. The loud rough rattling over the stone-paved streets was thought to be the last trial before a warm welcome and comfortable tea in a cosy room, and then the delightful pillows for the aching heads should atone for all.

No such thing. They rang the hotel bell many times before "mine host" appeared in his night-cap. "Who are you?" "What are your names?" "Where do you come from?" "Where are you going?" "How long do you want to stay?" "How many beds do you want?"

The patience of the travellers was fairly exhausted, and they indignantly requested admission. In they trooped, groping their way to the dirty, dingy, deserted *salle-à-manger*. They asked for supper. "The fire is out," and, worse than that, the larder was empty! But at last the slipshod waiter brought in a jug of cold boiled milk and some dry and mouldy bread. "Only that, and nothing more!"

The bedroom *étage* was a haunted-looking place, and seemed to be a mausoleum for slain blackbeetles, and other nocturnal visitors, perhaps more objectionable still. The former occupants of the rooms had waged successful war on their unwelcome invaders, and the *femmes de chambre* of the other sex had left their trophies undisturbed. Most of the party kept woeful vigil that weary night, and right glad was the nurse to speed away with her charge at an early hour in the morning.

How glad were each and all when they once more set their eyes on sunny, genial, balmy Pisa again. But here a woeful oversight was made, and bitterly did the amateur nurse suffer for *Mistake No. 6*. It had reference to the *étage* on which the apartments were taken, at least as regards those of the invalid. It was what is called "the church house," the private accommodation of which was much sacrificed to the chapel it contained. Unhappily, the poor traveller for health had her bedroom and dining-room on the entrance floor, selected to save her the fatigue of the stairs. No rooms on the *rez de chaussée* are wholesome in Italy, and foreigners who take them are liable to low fever and ague. And the cause is not far to seek, for the great exhalations from the ground, and luxuriant southern vegetation, during an hour before and an hour after sunset, produce these dangerous maladies, which sometimes cling to the sufferer for life. Thus, no one not a native of a southern clime should ever be out during those two hours. *Mistake No. 7* was now made. The lungs recovered, the cough nearly cured, but "brow-ague" supervened, and day after day the poor sufferer lay helpless in a

darkened room, reduced by a new complaint, from which she has from time to time continued to suffer ever since.

Through God's mercy the lungs had recovered. Pisa was the means employed and blessed by Him. There was a visit to Switzer-

land *en route* homewards the next summer, and a return to the Continent a few years subsequently. And although the experiences of the "amateur nurse" and the *ci-devant* patient were many of them singularly varied, and oftentimes very trying, the latter bears

up bravely. Twelve little grandchildren share her loving interest, with two of the three beloved daughters who made these journeys with her. But one has "fallen asleep!" and truly "the memory of the just is blessed."

S. F. A. CAULFIELD.

## THE ART OF WASHING.

By DORA DE BLAQUIÈRE.

### PART II.

WE have now arrived at the conclusion of our Tuesday's washing operations, and on Wednesday morning the mistress of the house must be prepared to help with the folding, and also with the mangling, if she be fortunate enough to possess a mangle. We will suppose you have only one servant, and therefore that you find yourself in the kitchen, with a clean table, early in the morning after breakfast. Here you should find the clean clothes in their appropriate baskets, or more probably heaped up on the swing-table in the kitchen, and covered up carefully from the dust. You will want a clear space on the table and a basin of clean water; and if the clothes to be starched have not been sorted out already, you should proceed to take them out and lay them successively aside as you come to them. In folding, the great rule to be observed is, to make the hems and selvages meet exactly. For instance, in folding a sheet see that the selvages are even at the sides and the hems at the top, and that it be well pulled out before folding. If these rules be not attended to, you will find the linen will never look well; the material will be strained from its natural lines, and will be uneven in every direction. In folding body-linen, the side seams of nightgowns and chemises must meet, and the shoulders be perfectly even. Put the tapes inside, and cover all buttons in the folds, or you will find them torn and broken. In many houses everything is put through the mangle, even though it be ironed afterwards. In damping or sprinkling the clothes, be careful to do it evenly, not making one part wetter than another, and fold every article without a crease. Handkerchiefs should be folded once, and then all rolled together for ironing. These and the table napkins can be ironed by the mistress herself. Most people starch the tablecloths slightly—a plan which makes them look better, and keep clean longer; and a recent authority says it will preserve the linen from stains, as the starch forms a film round each thread of the material, and this prevents the stain from sinking in too deeply. Table linen, *i.e.*, tablecloths, napkins, and sideboard cloths, are put into diluted starch, called starch water, and well rinsed in it. If starched, the table linen need not be mangled. Should the mistress of the house fail to understand the processes of washing, it would be a good thing if she tried to find out a good washerwoman who goes out by the day, and from her she would learn much if she only had a young and inexperienced servant. I have occasionally found very excellent laundresses, and I have learnt much all my life from them; and some years ago I had a course of instruction from a French laundress in clear starching and ironing.

In the old method of starching, various things were used to give the fine glaze to linen, *viz.*, wax, tallow, borax, turpentine, sugar, etc., and many people still "swear by" the idea of boiling starch. The first has been rendered nearly obsolete by the introduction of starch glazes, which are made to be used with either hot or cold starch. They are generally efficacious, as well as quite harmless. The general

ingredient is, I believe, stearine, and full directions are given by each manufacturer as to how his own starch glaze is to be used. So you must follow these faithfully, and you may depend on a good result being attained. I should recommend that a good rice starch be used, as although the most expensive, it is the most reliable. There are also some starch substitutes, which I have heard highly commended and for inexperienced people they are an advantage, as they cannot well make a mistake with them. But there is no teacher so good as experience; and I do not believe anyone could teach herself to iron a gentleman's shirt to perfection unless she had first seen someone do it. Everything, including shirts, should be starched on the wrong side, and after starching should be well rubbed between the hands, both to smooth the surface and to be sure that the starch has penetrated into them. Fold the shirts with the fronts together, to keep them from getting dry, and roll all the starched things and lay them together in a clean cloth, and put them aside, as they should lie so for at least twenty-four hours.

In ironing a shirt, you first turn it to the right side, then you begin at the back, and iron that to the collar and the back of cuffs. Then you iron the sleeves, first one side and then the other. After that, the back and front of the collar, and then open the fronts and lay the back in folds, and iron; then raise and fold back the front, and iron the back down to the bottom; lastly, you iron the bosom of the shirt, and finish. So you see it is rather a difficult matter, and you follow a fixed rule. An ironer must be provided with a holder, a piece of wet linen, and another of flannel, as well as a rough clean cloth to polish up her irons. The piece of wet linen is used to pass over the surface of the article, and with which to rub it well before you iron it. Then you iron lightly over on the wrong side first till stiff and dry. Your iron must be very hot or else it will stick to the material.

My French laundress told me that on the Continent much of the polish which we so much admire is produced by rubbing the iron itself with some kind of fat—a piece of good paraffin candle or of paraffin wax being used by the superior laundresses, and a bit of soap, or an end of any kind of candle, by the poorer ones. The wax is tied up and covered with several thicknesses of muslin, and rubbed upon the hot iron till it is well coated. It is then wiped with a clean rag, and the laundress proceeds to iron the damp shirt-front, collar, or cuff. This gives a real "French polish," and I see it is used in many of the laundries in London.

There are three kinds of irons, *viz.*, the box-iron, which is heated by a heater placed inside it: although heavy, it is always clean and nice; the flat iron, which is heated directly on a stove, and requires constant care in its use to keep it clean and polished, and just at the right heat for its purpose. The irons should not be too heavy, and three at least are required to ensure your always having a hot one ready, and no drawback of waiting during the work. Polishing-irons are used for the last

process in ironing shirts, and must be very hot, and also employed with all the strength possible, so as to give the needful polish.

An ironing-table must be of solid make, and very firm; and an old blanket is used to cover it; and, lastly, a sheet or cloth of linen is required to iron upon. We must also have a stand for the irons, and a bowl of water and linen rag to take out marks of dirt, creases, and rucks in the starched things under treatment.

For ironing shirt-fronts, my teacher preferred a yard of coarse flannel to lay under the fronts when ironing; but as a general thing in England the laundresses use a board of the same length as a shirt-front, and about fifteen inches wide. It may be from an inch to three inches thick, and should be covered with flannel sewn smoothly on it, with a covering of linen over it to iron upon.

The following is the cold method of making starch for what is called "clear starching" for fine linen, shirts, and underclothes. The recipe is given by a French laundress. Take half a pound of pure starch and place in a glazed vessel of earthenware, and pour over it enough cold water to mix it into a paste-like cream free from lumps. Then take enough cold water and add it gently till you have it of the required thickness—about two pints will be required. Take two ounces of borax and put into a small saucepan, and add enough water to cover it. Stand it over the fire, and stir it till melted. Then allow it to become quite cool; and when your starch is mixed, pour it in and stir it well together, adding, finally, a teaspoonful of turpentine.

The hot, or boiled starch, is made as follows—Take half a pound of starch, place in a clean tin; pour on enough boiling water to make it into a thick paste, and then add enough cold water to make it like a thin cream. Put it on the fire, and boil for a quarter of an hour. Stir it several times with a paraffin candle, or add two ounces of borax melted in a little boiling water. Use this starch hot. If a starch glaze be used, neither the borax, paraffin, nor the turpentine will be needed.

I must not forget to give you the recipe for soap jelly, which is added, when a washing-machine is used, to the boiling water—enough to make a good lather. The first is an American recipe, and makes a very excellent soft soap, which is a valuable thing to keep in the house at all times, and can be used for all purposes—scrubbing and cleaning as well as washing. Take ten quarts of soft water, three and a half pounds of soap sliced up finely, and one pound of washing soda. When the soap and water boil add the soda, and keep the mixture stirred to prevent boiling over. Boil for about a quarter of an hour, and then pour out of the saucepan or pot into a wooden tub or large jar, and add two and a half or three gallons of cold water, stirring all the time.

The ordinary recipe in use in the present day is—A pound of soap cut into fine slices to a gallon of water, and boiled up till the soap is melted. This is a clear jelly, and is used in sufficient quantity to make a good lather to the water in the machine.