

VISITING THE DISPENSARIES.

NELLY BLY NARROWLY ESCAPES HAVING HER TONSILS AMPUTATED.

TREATED AS A CHARITY PATIENT IN THE THROAT, SKIN AND EAR INFIRMARY.

She Joins the Throng of Poor Invalids and Finds Out How Free Medical Aid is Dispensed—One Braque Old Doctor Probes Her Throat and Nose and Wants to Perform an Operation—A Young Physician Tells Her Never to Wash Her Face with Soap—The Druggists' Big Frolics—What She Saw and Heard.

I started out the other day to investigate some of the New York dispensaries and see for myself how the poor girls fare who are really sick and have to seek charity. Naturally I concluded before I started that only the very poor were the recipients of free medical aid, so I spent some time over my make-up. When it was completed I flattered myself that I looked as poor as any of them.

My first visit was to the Metropolitan Throat Hospital, 31 West Thirty-ninth street. As I read the words, "Open the door," on a big silver plate, and was obeying the order, I heard the most heartrending cries from an inside room. I stood holding the door for a moment and heard again those dreadful cries of pain:

"Ow! ow! Dooter! ow!"

My hands curled at those sounds, yet I strained my ear-drums lest I should miss one.

"I won't hurt you. I won't hurt you, my good woman. Keep perfectly still one moment," came the surgeon, in a sharp, metallic voice. Then in lecture style, slow, with many impressive pauses, he continued: "This causes the tonsils, to turn outward, and, so allows, a— a better view, of the throat."

"O—w!" a prolonged cry.

"Don't move; I am doing that on purpose." Then resuming the discourse: "You see, in this way—"

"Ow! My! Doctor!"

"Keep still. I am only spraying your throat." A strong "whistling" sound like a stage storm, then the lecture goes on. "The object, in, to make them, wear away, gradually, not to, make them hurt, as was, formerly the practice. By this method, they come away, in white, or opaque granules. It is as well—"

By this time I had come to the conclusion that some poor girl had called to have her throat attended to and had been taken into the operating room on an instrument for a lecture. Closing the double door, I entered unannounced and quietly sat down beside a woman who occupied one end of a long bench in the hall. She was better clad than I, which made me feel quail on my ability to "make up" appropriately. A woman with a very small waist and extra large shoulders came out of the first room and looked me over.

"Do you wish to see the doctor?" she asked.

"Yes," I replied, curiously.

"Throat?"

dangle me. Only for an instant, though; then I saw a doctor sitting at one side of the table motion to me. I sat down facing him and glanced about. The walls were covered with pictures of the throat in all conditions. The table was strewn with all sorts of gleaming instruments. Large reflectors made an unusual brilliancy. On the opposite side of the table, trying to make a young man open his mouth wider than nature had most liberally made it, was another doctor. Standing near by, intently watching every move, was a bald-headed pupil. Both of the doctors had glass reflectors bound over their right eyes. It looked so much like an engine-headlight in a snow-storm that when it was turned on me I had a lively impulse to laugh.

"What is wrong?" he asked, curiously, taking my book and glancing through it.

"My throat," I replied, with ebbing spirits.

"Let me see," he said, taking a small instrument out of a finger bowl, "Open your mouth wide."

I opened it. I did not want to, but I knew I was in for it. He caught my chin firmly and ran the instrument down my throat. Just then the horrible thought came that with the same thing he had looked into the other woman's throat. And she had cancer! Ugh!

"What's wrong? What's wrong?" he asked sharply, as I involuntarily jerked away and held my breath to prevent my disgust from materializing.

"I'm sick, that's all," I replied faintly.

"Well, if you're going to pull away in that manner I can't do anything for you. Open again. Now say ah—ah."

"Ug—ug," I grunted, he meanwhile holding my tongue down.

"He—oo," he commanded.

"He—oo!" I imitated, I pleaded.

"Very well. I want you to ah," unfeelingly.

"If you get sick it won't hurt you. I am making you that way on purpose."

The thing goes away down my throat again. My stomach rocks most frightfully. I know it is useless to beg off. I have half an inclination to laugh and half to box the doctor's ears.

"That tonsil needs a piece cut off," he said, dropping the probing instrument and taking up another whose bright gleam gave me a chill.

I'll do a great deal, I think pathologically, to get a story, but I won't give up half a tonsil. But how to get away. I can't run for the door, and if I object to giving up all claim to a useless tonsil, he will discover that I am not a bona fide patient. I look at him in fear and alarm. He takes up a piece of linen. He throws his head-light into my eyes, I am blinded! With a quick movement he catches my tongue and wraps the linen tightly around it. I am by force speechless! Mercy, mercy, will he cut a tonsil out and not allow me a word of explanation?

Many warnings, which my acquaintances have heeded at me, time after time, about some day getting caught in my own trap seem like a spectre before me. It's an agonizing thing to be able to think and not to speak in moments like these. Upon disagreeable realizations one always thinks of unpleasant taunts, and comedies, the latest jokes and the last minstrel show. I couldn't keep my mind off the doctor and the silver knife, try as I would.

He turns, still holding my tongue—more than I can do myself, I see again; he reaches for the dreaded instrument. I wildly snatch his hands with both mine and pull my tongue free.

"I won't be cut," I cried. "I am too nervous—don't you know. I will come again when—when my nerves are better."

"That's all foolishness," he answered, shortly.

"You must not give way to your nerves."

"But, somehow, I do lately," I pleaded, eagerly. "I am run down. My nerves are very bad to-day. I will come again."

"That's very foolish" (rubbing the knife).

"They are no worse to-day than they will be any day."

"Oh, but I sat out there and heard that woman yell, and that has shattered me," I explained.

"I did not hurt that woman. Let me make one more examination." He took a piece of cotton, and wrapping it around a probe, dipped the end into a bottle of dark fluid. He held my head back and ran this up my nose until I could almost feel it touch my brain. It left a burning sensation in my nose and throat, and as he removed it I half choked.

physicians. Then again, wrong can be done by a physician opening a dispensary and working it for an advertisement, at the same time charging a small fee "because he does not want to be blamed for taking patients away from his opponents." A ten-cent fee will make a dispensary pay very well. I don't think there is any law to prevent a doctor from opening a dispensary if he chooses, and the chances for abusing it are great.

I have understood that probably one or two dispensaries pay their physicians. The majority do not. Young physicians, while waiting their practice to grow to a supporting point, are glad of the chance to gain experience. Dispensaries are especially beneficial to young physicians who wish to make a specialty of any disease, so while benefiting the poor gratuitously they do the same for young physicians.

The Northwestern Dispensary, corner of Thirty-sixth street and Ninth avenue, was the next one I visited. Although the rain was coming down in torrents I found people going there as they go to church—in squads. I followed in their wake, up bare stairs, through empty, deserted looking halls, to a dark inside room. The only windows in it were shut off by the drug department.

IN THE CROWD OF CHARITY PATIENTS.

This dark room was filled with benches. Each bench held from two to half a dozen specimens of humanity with all sorts of sores and ulcers. I quietly slipped into the last bench so as to command a view of the room. A pale, sad-faced woman, with silver-gray hair sat beside me. On her knee she held a baby whose misproportioned head, half covered with a gray wool hood, reminded me of photographs I have seen of an 8½ head on a six months' old baby. The case of "big head" did not seem to interfere with the child. He beat a tattoo with his woolen heels on his mother's knee, meanwhile tugging away, with dirty fists and mouth, at something tied up in a linen cloth which had once been white.

On towards the front were women in shabby gowns, many nursing babies, others holding little tots by their sides. They were some few young girls who made an attempt at display in their apparel. Tottering, white-haired men, strong young workmen with bandaged arms or heads, and little boys with large bottles were waiting.

Everything was as quiet and orderly as in a church. Sometimes one woman would gossip in low tones with another. Then a mother would whisper, "Sh, sh," to her fretful babe. Then a new patient would quietly enter and take a place among us. A continual stream kept going with bottles and boxes in their hands to the drug window. An iron rail prevented crowding. They would hand in their prescriptions and bottles or box, as the case called for, and when it was returned moved more quietly out.

At last a man came into the room in a quick, jerky way and took a stand near a hall door.

"Those to see the doctors come this way," he called, and an assistant helped get us in line.

"What is wrong with you?" he asked the first.

"An aching in my joints," replied the old man in a quavering voice.

"That room," pointing somewhere out in the hall. Then to the next "What is wrong with you?" and so on down the line until it came my turn.

"What is wrong with you?" he inquired.

"My skin is rough," I replied.

"Breaking out?"

"Yes, a little," I answered, stretching the truth as well as the common.

"Have two. Next—What is wrong with you?" I went into the room indicated. Two old men were waiting there. One sat in a corner in a drooping, despondent way; the other, in the opposite corner, leaned back with a rakish air as if the world pleased him well. He was old, but rakish. I was conscious that he was trying to catch my eye. As last when he did so, he gave a little smile. I was surprised at his audacity and looked again, thinking my sight deceived me. No, he smiled again, and I kept my eyes fixed on the blank wall thereafter.

A good deal after the right hour a young doctor came bustling in.

"First," he called, entering a small room at the end. One of the old men went in.

"Have you been here before?"

"Yes, sir," I heard the old man reply.

"Where's your card?"

"Sir?"

could not learn. This is the prescription which I was given:

R—Mag. Sulph..... ℥ii
N. A. P. P. O'Hell.

A druggist near the union of Broadway and Sixth avenue filled it.

"How much, please?" I asked as he handed me the small box.

"Fifty cents," he said, and I paid it. This makes the druggist's profit over and above the dispensary profit 40 cents, less the price of a small glass jar not costing more than two or three cents.

I did not wait to be treated at the Demit Dispensary, corner Second avenue and Twenty-third street. It is one of the oldest in the city and is kept in splendid running order. In disguise I visited several more, among them Bellevue Hospital Dispensary, but found nothing of especial note differing from that which I have already described. In all I found the poor kindly treated, although in many instances the doctor's manners were quite brusque.

I have come to four conclusions:

First—That New York is the most charitable city in the world.

Second—That charity is daily outraged in numerous cases.

Third—That the poor have a much better chance to improve their conditions than those in moderate circumstances.

Fourth—That too much and ill-directed charity breeds pauperism.

NELLIE BLY.

177 OF THE BOULEVARD

All these questions were printed in a small book which she was my answer. Then printing "NELLIE BLY" alongside it to me with this card, which was printed in German:

MY MOOD WAS ANYTHING BUT CHEERFUL THE NEXT day when I started out on my second visit. I had started it and I would, perseverer. I decided this time to complain of my ear. I had no idea as to the manner of treating such cases, but I felt confident that they could not attempt to amputate half an ear. Anything but cutting for me. This visit was to the West Side German Dispensary, 411 West Thirty-eighth street. It occupies the parlor floor in a small brick building with a high stoop. No one ever needs the bell, so striking out at last I open the door and walk into the uncarpeted hall, open to a half-open glass door—in this room, waiting

the doctor can have a good case.

the words, "Open the door," I heard the door open and was obeying the order, I heard the most heartrending cries from an inside room. I stood holding the door for a moment and heard again these dreadful cries of pain:

"Owl! Doctor! owl!"
By being carried at these sounds, yet I strained my ear-drum lest I should miss one.
"I won't hurt you. I won't hurt you, my good woman. Keep perfectly still one moment," came the answer, in a sharp, metallic voice. Then in lecture style, slow, with many impressive pauses, it continued: "This, causes the tonsils, to turn outward, and, so allows, a— a better view, of the— of the throat."

"O—w!" a prolonged cry.
"Don't move; I am doing that on purpose."
Then resuming the discourse: "You see, in this way—"

"Owl! My! Doctor!"
"Keep still. I am only spraying your throat." A strong "whistling" sound like a stage storm, then the lecture goes on. "The object, is, to make them, wear away, gradually, and so, make them burst, as was, formerly the practice. By this method, they come away, in white, or opaque flakes. It is as well—"

By this time I had come to the conclusion that some poor girl had called to have her throat attended to and had been taken into the operating-room as an illustration for a lecture. Closing the double door, I entered unannounced and quietly sat down beside a woman who occupied one end of the bench. She was a young woman, and I felt that I, which made me feel quailish on my ability to "make up" appropriately. A woman with a very small waist and extra large shoulders came out of the first room and looked me over.

"Do you wish to see the doctor?" she asked.
"Yes," I replied, curtly.
"Throat?"
"Yes."
"Come in here," she said, leading the way into the room she had just left. It was a small, uncarpeted hall room, with long benches on one end. The front end, cut off with an iron fence, held a desk and a small apothecary shop. Over the hospital was a black tablet, inscribed in commemoration of John D. Jones, esquire's gift of the building in 1881. Below it was a small box, whose plain face bore the words: "Charity Fund for the Hospital."

"What is your name?" asked the girl behind the railing.

"Nora Simpson," I replied modestly, as she dipped her pen in the ink preparatory to recording my answers.

- "Where were you born?"
- "Rainetbeck."
- "New York State?"
- "Yes."
- "Where do you live?"
- "No. 110 West Twenty-fifth street."
- "Married or single?"
- "Single."
- "Present occupation?"
- "Making scarfs."
- "Ever been here before?"
- "No."

All these questions were printed in a small book which she wrote my answers. Then marking the book "9, 62," she gave it to me with this card, one side of which was printed in German:

METROPOLITAN THROAT HOSPITAL,
851 West Thirty-fourth street.
Dr. CLYDE WAGNER's patient,
NORA SIMPSON, No. 8, 62,
MONDAY AND THURSDAY, at 2 o'clock.
Medical Staff:
Clinton Wagner, M. D., 24 West Fifty-first street.
William J. Swift, M. D., 40 East Thirtieth street.
G. B. Hope, M. D., 34 West Fifty-first street.
J. D. Apperson, M. D., 11 West 100th street.
Hospital Secretary, CHARLES W. WOOD, 110 West Twenty-fifth street.

"Sit out in the hall, and when the doctor is ready for you I will tell you," she said.
"They have had her in there for an hour," whispered the woman beside me on the bench. "They're experimenting on her so as to teach a young doctor. I wish the old doctor won't go away afore my turn. I hate young doctors to learn on me."

"I echoed her sentiments."
"What is wrong with the woman?" I asked, her "oohes!" occasionally punctuating our conversation.
"She thinks she has cancer," she whispered. "It's all down here," indicating the middle of the collar-bone, "and it's hard to get at. She suffers awful with it. Hear how bad they have made her voice. It wasn't so husky at first."
"How are the doctors, kind?" I asked.
"Oh, yes, they're kind enough. Then it doesn't cost anything unless you let 'em know your man gets good wages; then they'd want ter visit your house an' be paid."

More patients were coming. First came a young man, who I should judge from his clothing was in comfortable circumstances. Then a young woman came whose gown was so neat that I thought she had mistaken the place; but no, she sat down on the bench opposite. Two more young men, likewise well clad, joined the group. I was the poorest dressed in the hall.

A bell tapped twice and the young woman came from the room to say that the doctor wished to see the new patient first. It was I.

A HORRIBLE SITUATION.
Stepping suddenly into the room from the dark hall made the brilliancy of the gas and reflectors

"H—e—I I'm not!"
"Very well. I want you to lie."
"If you get sick it won't hurt you. I am making you that way on purpose."
The thing goes away down my throat again. My stomach rocks most frightfully. I know it is useless to beg off. I have half an inclination to laugh and half to box the doctor's ears.

"That tonsil needs a piece cut off," he said, dropping the probing instrument and taking up another whose bright gleam gave me a chill.
"I'll do a great deal, I think, pathologically, to get a story, but I won't give up half a tonsil. But how to get away. I can't run for the door, and if I object to giving up all claim to a useless tonsil, he will discover that I am not a bona fide patient. I look at him in fear and alarm. He takes up a piece of linen. He throws his head-light into my eyes, I am blinded! With a quick movement he catches my tongue and wraps the linen tightly around it. I am by force speechless! Mercy, mercy, will he cut a tonsil out and not allow me a word of explanation?"

Many warnings, which my acquaintances have hurled at me, time after time, about some day getting caught in my own trap flash like a speare before me. It's an agonizing thing to be able to think and not to speak in moments like these. Upon disagreeable realizations one always thinks of unpleasant things, instead of comedies, the latest jokes and the latest minstrel show. I couldn't keep my mind off the doctor and the silver knife, try as I would.

He turns, still holding my tongue—more than I can do myself. I see again; he reaches for the dreaded instrument. I wildly stretch his hands with both mine and pull my tongue free.

"I won't be out," I cried. "I am too nervous, don't you know. I—I will come again when— when my nerves are better."
"That's all foolishness," he answered, shortly.
"You must not give way to your nerves."
"But, somehow, I do lately," I pleaded, eagerly. "I am run down. My nerves are very bad to-day. I will come again."

"That's very foolish" (rubbing the knife).
"They are no worse to-day than they will be any day."

"Oh, but I sat out there and heard that woman yell, and that has shattered me," I explained.
"I did not hurt that woman. Let me make one more examination." He took a piece of cotton, and wrapping it around a probe, dipped the end into a bottle of dark fluid. He held my head back and ran this up my nose until I could almost feel it touch my brain. It left a burning sensation in my nose and throat, and as he removed it I half choked.

"Spot it out, spit it out," he said. Too late!
"It's gone down," I gasped meekly.
"I can't do anything for you if you are going to act this way." Then writing something in the book, he told me to leave it where I got it, and so I left.

ENDING THE EAR DROPPING.

My mood was anything but cheerful the next day when I started out on my second visit. I had started it and I would persevere. I decided this time to complain of my ear. I had no idea as to the manner of treating such cases, but I felt confident that they could not attempt to amputate half an ear. Anything but cutting for me. This visit was to the West Side German Dispensary, 411 West Thirty-eighth street. It occupies the parlor floor in a small brick building with a high stoop. No one ever heads the bell, so trying out at last I open the door and walk into the uncarpeted hall, back to a half open glass door. In this room, waiting on the bare benches, are some half dozen men and women. One corner has a little drug store, and near it a conspicuous sign gave forth this warning: "None but the poor treated here."

A man in a wet, worn suit sat slumping on a bench. I sat down between him and a woman who had hennet and her baby wrapped in one shawl.
"Is the doctor engaged, do you know?" I asked the woman. She had one knee crossed over the other. When I addressed her she set the under foot into a soothing movement, for the benefit of her babe.

"Yah, him mit a sick woman."
"Has he been in there long?"
"Yah, mit some time already."
"Is your baby sick?"
"Yah, him vas sick mit him's ears."

"Oh, how sad!" I reply sympathetically. Then, with a harrowing remembrance of my throat experience, I ask cautiously, "How does the doctor treat your baby?"

"Dreat him? Vas es dot—doctor him? Yah, yah! Him takes mine Yooob and runs him drough mit his nose to his ear. Mine Yooob schreams so loud as never vas, and den all der dime mine doctor he runs it mit mine Yooob's ear again some more. Mine grateful! I shant tink der after vas begins so bad."

"Do you mean that he probed through the nose to the ear?" I asked in horrified accents.
"Yah, yah! dot es it."

No. I did not stay to be probed. I got up and quietly made my way to the door. My breath came with more regularly when I was outside and my heart resumed a more dignified pace.

Over a half million people every year receive free treatment in the New York dispensaries and hospitals. It may be well to state here that dispensaries are maintained by charity. Many of the dispensaries have been stately endowed. They are intended only for the use of the worthy poor, but many times are they imposed upon by people well able to pay. For this very reason some of the medical journals have protested against their being so many dispensaries. They claim that treating people who are able to pay puts young

gowns, many nursing, and many other things, by their sides. They were some of the young girls who made an attempt on sleeping in their parents. Tottering, white-faced men, among young workmen with bandaged arms or limbs, and little boys with large buttons were waiting. Everything was as quiet and orderly as in a church. Sometimes one woman would gossip in low tones with another. Then a mother would whisper, "Sh, sh," to her fretful babe. Then a new patient would quietly enter and take a place among us. A continual stream kept going with bottles and boxes in their hands to the drug window. An iron rail prevented crowding. They would hand in their prescriptions and bottles or box, as the case called for, and when it was returned moved more quietly out.

At last a man came into the room in a quiet, jerky way and took a stand near a hall door.

"Those to see the doctors come this way," he called, and an assistant helped get us in line.

"What is wrong with you?" he asked the first.

"An aching in my joints," replied the old man in a quavering voice.

"That room," pointing somewhere out in the hall. Then to the next "What is wrong with you?" and so on down the line until it came my turn.

"What is wrong with you?" he inquired.
"My skin is rough," I replied.

"Breaking out?"
"Yes, a little," I answered, stretching the truth a trifle to fit the occasion.

"Room two. Next—What is wrong with you?" I went into the room indicated. Two old men were waiting there. One sat in a corner in a drooping, despondent way; the other, in the opposite corner, leaned back with a raskish air as if the world pleased him well. He was old, but raskish. I was conscious that he was trying to catch my eye. At last when he did so, he gave a little smile. I was surprised at his audacity and looked again, thinking my sight deceived me. No, he smiled again, and I kept my eyes fixed on the blank wall thereafter.

A good deal after the right hour a younger doctor came bustling in.

"First," he called, entering a small room at the end. One of the old men went in.

"Have you been here before?"
"Yes, sir," I heard the old man reply.

"Where is your card?"
"Sir?"

"Where is your card? You must bring your card if you want to be treated."

"I forgot it, sir. I will bring it the next time, sir. My leg, sir, is much worse."

"Have you received regular treatment?"
"No, sir; I 'ave n't been 'ere' more'n a month."

"You will never get well if you do not come regularly. Get this prescription filled and apply the salve every night. Good day. Next."

NEVER WASH YOUR FACE WITH SOAP.
The third time he said "Next," I went in. I found this room as bare as the others. Two chairs, one table and a wooden box filled with sawdust, for the use of wood masticators.

"Have you ever been here before?" the doctor asked, and when I answered in the negative he asked my name, address and occupation, all of which he wrote in a large book on the table before him.

"What are you?"
"My face gets rough when I wash," I replied.

"Do you use soap?"
"Yes."

"Well, no young lady can have a good complexion and use soap. It ruins the skin."

"But how else will I keep clean?" I asked.

"Bathe your face in hot water and rub with a coarse towel. I keep clean and I have not used soap for eight years. Take this prescription, and wash one or two times a day. You must bring your own box for it, you know—and every night, before retiring, bathe your face in hot water—as hot as you can stand, then rub this salve well into your skin. In a short time you will have a nice complexion. Come back next week. I may have to put you under other treatment. Always bring this card with you."

NORTHWESTERN DISPENSARY,
ALWAYS BRING THIS WITH YOU.
Come at 2 o'clock.
DISEASES OF THE SKIN,
MONDAY, WEDNESDAY AND FRIDAY.
No. 75. Date, Nov. 26.
DOCTOR S. J. O'NEIL, 421 E. 86.
Keep this clean. Do not roll or break it.

I went to the drug department and handing the man the prescription asked what it would cost.
"Ten cents," he replied. "Where's your box?"
"I have none to-day. I'll bring it back tomorrow. Do you ever charge any more for other prescriptions?"
"Certainly not. All prescriptions are 10 cents each."

How THE DRUGGISTS GET RICH.
Hoping to gain some estimate of what druggists' profits are, I decided to have the prescriptions filled at an independent drug store. Dispensaries fill all prescriptions for 10 cents and yet they are said to clear all expenses by their drug department alone, and make a profit. What becomes of this profit? Whether it returns to the original charity fund I