

NURSES HAVE MUSIC WHEREVER THEY GO

(Written for "The Listener" by E.M.S.)

I AM a District Nurse, and a Ford car takes me sometimes 80 miles or more in a day to country townships or isolated farms, in wet weather and fine. The houses I visit may be good, bad or indifferent, but only on the rarest occasions do I come across one without a radio.

Having the general welfare of this particular community at heart, I sometimes wonder whether the "wireless" is becoming a kind of background that the average person cannot do without, and whether this absence of quietness in the homes is going to have an ill-effect on the nervous systems of the people as time goes on.

Here is a fair specimen of my day in the country with the radio:

I set sail at 8.30 a.m., and by the time I arrive at Mrs. — to inquire how all the family are progressing with the whooping cough, the 8.45 London News is coming over the air. While mother is frantically trying to clear up the breakfast dishes, and attending to Bobbie, who is just indulging in a bad bout of coughing, the BBC announcer reports "General advance in Italy—5th Army nearing Cassino." Bobbie continues coughing, and the clatter of dishes goes on. "Well, good-bye, Mrs. —. Don't let any of the children go to school until I've seen you again, and don't forget their cod liver oil." Then off I go to my next port of call.

Aunt Daisy Intervenes

Here poor old Grandpa, with a broken leg, is being fixed up for the day by his business-like daughter-in-law, so I hurriedly roll up my sleeves and get to work to offer some assistance. Aunt Daisy is well launched upon her recipes for the day, and young Mrs. — has to leave me for a moment while she gets a paper and pencil to take a note or two.

And now I'm off again down the road to see Mrs. —. She has rheumatoid arthritis, and is a very sad case. She is listening to the Devotional Service, so we carry on our treatment in a reverential silence suitable to the occasion.

After some miles, and the opening and shutting of innumerable gates, I arrive at Mr. —'s house to ask why the children have not been attending school regularly. Mrs. — greets me in a somewhat antagonistic manner, and I have to inform her that if she will kindly try to stop the baby crying, and turn off the lady who is talking about "Health in the Home," I will be pleased to state my errand. Seeing that I don't mean to be side-tracked, she manages to ensure a little silence until our business is completed, and I move off.

I refuse to take some lunch at the home of a kindly patient, and soon draw in to the side of a golden gorse bush to have the snack I have brought with me. This short interlude for dreaming and reflection gives me time to enjoy the peace and loveliness of a summer day in the country.

But I must move on if I am to see everyone to-day.

Mrs. —'s little girl has had a

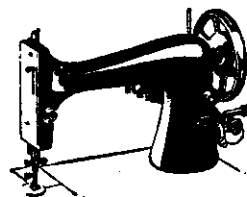
severe burn, which has to be dressed, and it's a fairly painful business. I make a request that the swing band be turned off the radio until little Dawn's wails have ceased. "I just don't know what I'd do without the wireless, Nurse. I'd go fair crazy in this outlandish place, being a town girl, and not brought up to the loneliness."

A Heaven-sent Blessing

And so on I go again until I come to the home of old Mr. —, who has to go very carefully, as his heart misses a beat here and there. I find him sitting with rapt attention listening to the Classical Hour programme—Boston Promenade Orchestra, playing Hungarian Rhapsody No. 1 (Liszt).

Well, Mr. —'s case brought me back to charity again. I realised—and you will agree with me—that although the radio may in some instances be mis-used, in the main it brings education, happiness, and fellowship to thousands of lonely and sick people. And the sick at least are my concern.

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