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A BAD CASE OF PEDICULOSIS

DEAR EDITOR: A short time ago I was called to a baby girl, eleven months old, sick with tonsillitis. The parents told me on my arrival that they had both been ill, and their three children had for several days been left almost entirely to the care of the nursemaid, Nellie, a pretty, neat-looking girl of about nineteen. After calling me, the parents discovered several lice on the baby's head, and being much upset by this addition to their troubles, told me of it as soon as I arrived. I told them it would not take long to cure the baby's head, and it did not; in two days it was well. On the day after I came, Mrs. A. sent for some larkspur and treated the boys' heads, finding both infected, and after finding lice on the maid's pillow, told her the whole family was infected, and that if she would take down her hair, she would treat her head also. After looking at her hair, she called me. The outside of her hair looked all right, but the crown and back were covered with scabs, blood and dandruff. The hair on the crown was all matted, and all around that the hair was stiff with nits. The odor was sickening. She said she had been infected about two weeks before, that it did not itch much but always felt sore.

I advised an application of larkspur, and telephoned the family doctor to ask him to make an examination and see whether there was any disease besides pediculosis. He was very busy and did not come till the afternoon of the third day, when he made an examination and said he had never seen anything like it, but that it was pediculosis, and nothing else. He said she ought to go to a dispensary or hospital for treatment, but I offered to give it while on the case. He told me to give two shampoos each day with tincture of green soap and a small brush, following each with larkspur. I spent over an hour on the first treatment, which was hard on account of the odor. The second was more encouraging, for I was able to comb the whole of the hair, and by the third treatment, I got the scalp clean, the nits were all dead, and I got some of them off. I left the case that night, Nellie being very grateful, and suggested their having a district nurse finish the treatment. After a day or two the district nurse used salt and vinegar to take the nits from the hair.

Since leaving that case another doctor has told me that bichloride of mercury, 1-2000, would kill both lice and nits and that there was no odor.

Can anyone tell me whether head lice will live and breed on the body, or body lice live and breed on the head, and how long either kind will live when off the body—if they fall to the floor, for instance? Also, what is the best way to remove nits from the hair?

I have recently become a member of the Society of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis, and have read the literature which is sent to each member as it is published. It is well worth the \$2 a year for dues to know what is being done along that line.

Miss Damer's letter in the November JOURNAL is very interesting, and all the articles are good. I wish nurses were more interested in their organizations, both local and state, and would join them and try to attend the meetings.

Massachusetts.

F. H., R.N.