

is being made to husband the failing strength, lest it prove insufficient for the inevitable crisis threatening the life of a loved one? After the crisis has been passed, and every available means is being studied to aid Nature in the recovery of strength, with the dangers of a relapse ever confronting the watchers by the bed-side, can one refrain from marvelling at the inconsistency of friends (?) who will insist upon the privilege of fatiguing the sick one?

As a rule visits should be short, from only members of the family or very intimate friends—and fortunate is the patient who numbers among these only persons of good judgment. As far as practicable, whatever is unpleasant should be kept from the sick-room. A great lack of judgment is shown by worrying a sick, anxious mother with reports of the almost unavoidable difficulties with the servants, or other unpleasant occurrences in the house, which her sickness renders her unable to remedy. Unfortunately the intimate friend may entertain a patient suffering from nervous prostration, brought on by domestic trials, by repeating the unkind remarks made by others regarding her affairs.

There are fussy, nervous, boisterous persons—those tiresome talkers who never make use of periods in their conversation—and those who “must be going,” but fatigue us, even while well, by staying and staying when they have nothing more to say. Neither of these classes ought to be admitted to the sick-room. Their line of duty lies in some other direction than visiting the sick.

Visitors ought not to be entertained (?) by their sick friends during the evening, neither should they follow each other so closely as to prevent the interval required for rest between them. How often does a friend leave saying, “Now you must rest, for I really fear that I have fatigued you,” not knowing that one visitor left the room just before her entrance, and another was awaiting her turn to follow her “to stay only a minute.” The poor tired sick one knew it, but could not incur their displeasure by refusing to see them. A patient may brighten up at the entrance and during the stay of a visitor, apparently enjoying and being benefited by the animated conversation about business affairs, or the outside world and its doings. He may be urged to remain longer and come oftener, feeling flattered that his long visit must be satisfactory. The anxious attendant knows what an exhaustion follows—though the patient cannot understand *why* it is impossible to sleep before midnight, or perhaps morning—and the chance is, that the slow improvement of a week may be lost in a few hours. To what extent visitors are responsible for the so-called “inscru-

table dispensations of Providence” is left for the reader’s consideration.

Chronic cases, some convalescent and surgical patients, and poor persons, frequently enjoy and are much benefited by discreet, helpful visitors. Occasionally a very sick person particularly desires to see some friend (and should be gratified, if possible), which usually promotes comfort and quietude of mind. Patients very sick, or rallying from surgical operations, are sometimes disturbed by the members of their own families, as their presence suggests thought and worry in regard to business or domestic affairs, which do not seem to occupy their minds when alone with the Nurses and attendants.

This is often noticed in Hospitals, as well as in private Nursing, and a case among many is recalled as an example: A man was reviving from the effects of an anæsthetic, after a severe surgical operation, whose chance for recovery could best be promoted by becoming quiet. His wife and several friends stood beside him, in their solicitude, endeavouring to quiet his confused fears and ideas, while he insisted upon the former remaining with him, and continued to talk about his condition, chances for recovery, and matters at home. The almost distracted wife knew not what to do, as it seemed cruel to leave him alone with strangers, while imploring her to stay, and it did appear hard-hearted in the Doctor to insist upon her going away from him. The advantage of his being left alone was apparent when he immediately ceased talking and fretting, and quietly sank into a refreshing sleep, the object most desired in his critical condition.

It is very comforting to sick persons to be reminded that their friends in the busy world remember them in affliction. Inquiries regarding their welfare, accompanied by a sympathetic note or message, books, flowers, fruit, or little delicacies, which has been ascertained may be eaten, will often afford satisfactory evidence of interest in them. These are most gratefully received, without the disadvantage of exhausting the strength as visits usually do.

Nothing seems more universally welcome in the sick-room than fresh, bright flowers, excluding such as have a depressing odour. If the giver can remember some favourite of the invalid, the thoughtfulness will be doubly appreciated, and it is often a pastime and satisfaction to be allowed to look at and handle them before being arranged and put into water. Like the chair for a visitor, let them be placed near the bed, if convenient, but always where the eyes, weary of everything else in the room, can rest upon them comfortably without turning the head, but not between the patient and the light, or the window.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)