

fidential relations as the latter; and many a sick person tells a Nurse facts which would be in the highest degree injurious to the narrator if they were repeated and became generally known. The general rule which governs the medical profession in this matter has, it appears, not been set forth in any authoritative printed statement, rule or regulation; but the unwritten law on the subject is as clear as it is binding. It is to the effect that no medical man shall repeat, or communicate to another person, information concerning any patient—and which he has therefore obtained practically under the seal of professional secrecy—without such patient's leave and authority.

There are, however, usually said to be two exceptions to this rule. It is said that no medical man should keep to himself knowledge of a proposed or perpetrated crime on the part of one of his patients, for the avowed reason that by such silence on his part he would become either an aider or abettor of the crime, or at least accessory after the fact. And the second exception is the well-defined legal principle that in a Court of Law, under examination on oath in the witness box, a medical man is bound to answer questions and to give information which may be regarded by the Judge as necessary for the furtherance of justice, even if such information were obtained by him in professional confidence. Cases of the former kind, however, are so rare that they may be, practically, left out of consideration, and it would certainly always be within the power of a medical man to refuse to hear confessions involving a suggestion of crime.

The second class of cases are by no means unusual, and there have been instances in which, even in such circumstances, a medical man has refused to give the required information until threatened with committal for contempt of Court by the Judge. Such a position is always a difficult one, and at the same time the law on the subject is quite distinct; for the witness, upon his subpoena, is bound to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

With these possible reservations—and neither of them were included in the case in question—it is beyond all dispute that professional confidences should be regarded as absolutely sacred. It is of the greatest moment to the public, and a highly honourable fact to the medical profession, that at

the present day medical men are perhaps more absolutely trusted than any other body of professional men. They are made the recipients of secrets many of which would ruin their patients were they to be made public; and yet such secrets are often entrusted to the keeping of a comparative stranger, with the firm confidence that they will be held inviolable. It is by no means an unusual occurrence to hear medical men say that no one except themselves know even who their patients are; and it is, to our knowledge, a frequent remark made by medical men's wives that they are never told the slightest particulars concerning any of their husband's patients.

With regard to Nurses, the matter stands precisely on the same footing; but, unfortunately, there is reason to believe that hitherto it has not been sufficiently impressed upon them that they also must regard all professional confidences as sacred. If Nurses desire to obtain the entire confidence of the public and the absolute trust which medical men have shown themselves to be so thoroughly worthy of, they must adopt the same principles of action, and must on no account repeat to anyone, save the doctor in attendance, any facts which they have observed, or which they have learnt from their patients. There are, unhappily, some few women—who are almost invariably untrained Nurses—who consider it not unworthy to recount, even in public, facts which they have learnt in their professional capacity. We have even heard of a discreditable few who will retail private information concerning the habits of their patients, or even more private matters connected with families in which they have nursed. Such women inevitably bring great, and generally undeserved, reproach upon the Nursing profession. From wide experience we are glad to know that the rule to which we have referred, guiding medical men in such matters, is clearly understood and rigorously maintained by the great majority of Trained Nurses, who naturally desire that they personally, and their profession, shall deserve and gain the unstinted confidence of the public.

DELICIOUS MAZAWATTEE TEAS.
 DELICIOUS MAZAWATTEE TEAS.
 DELICIOUS MAZAWATTEE TEAS.
 DELICIOUS MAZAWATTEE TEAS.
 DELICIOUS MAZAWATTEE TEAS.
 Sold by Leading Family Grocers Everywhere.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)