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Editorial.

THE NURSING OF CHRONIC CASES.

One of the first lessons which we learn in regard to nursing—one which we may, indeed, assimilate before entering a hospital for training at all—is that when we assume the responsibilities of a nurse we place our services at the disposal of the sick without distinction of sex, class, or colour. Our duty is, and our pleasure should be, to help to relieve suffering, and to care for the helpless so long as our services are required. We could scarcely have a nobler ideal than this with which we enter upon our nursing career. Self finds little place in it. The life we have of our own free will adopted involves, if it is to be lived aright, the setting aside of self for the good of those who need our care.

And in many respects the lesson has been laid to heart. Daily there are nurses up and down the country who subject themselves to infection, who undertake duties naturally most repugnant, who will cheerfully risk their lives for the patients under their care. We have our honour roll of nurses, of whom we are proud. Inscribed on it in our hearts, if not emblazoned in public places in letters of gold, are the names of such women as Agnes Jones, whose valuable life was early cut short owing to her labours in the cause of poor law nursing reform, but whose work and influence bear fruit to this day. We can tell of the quiet work of nurses on a lonely island in a typhus epidemic, of nurses struggling with an insane patient on a narrow parapet, to fall from which meant instant death, in order to rescue him from self-destruction, and we are proud that the nursing spirit rings true.

But, nevertheless, there is a class of case to which nurses do not always realise their obligations. We refer to those of a chronic character, which some nurses appear to consider unworthy of their skilled atten-

tion. To hear the way in which they refer contemptuously to a helpless patient, dependent upon them for all his comfort, and for not a small amount of his pleasure in life as "only a stupid old chronic," is to make one wonder if such nurses consider that the sick exist for the purpose of providing them with interesting cases. Consider the case of a patient once energetic and self-dependent, now stricken down by paralysis and dependent on others every time he desires even to move, and for every small and necessary office. If a nurse will take the trouble to try to enter into the feelings of such a patient, she surely cannot regard it as anything but a privilege if she is able in any degree to lighten the burden of such an one. If not, then she has missed the true spirit of her calling, and the sooner she realises it the better; for the heartless woman, the woman without sympathy with every form of suffering, whether it presents itself to her in an attractive form or not, is one who has mistaken her vocation in adopting that of nursing.

If nurses felt, as they should do, ashamed to speak disparagingly of "chronics," we should not hear such complaints as that "nurse was very good while he was really ill, but she was glad to get away; she says she does not take chronic cases."

It really would seem as if some private nurses nowadays must be provided with luxurious surroundings, charming patients suffering from acute diseases, and agreeable and deferential employers, before they will condescend to bestow their services (for a consideration) upon them. There is a danger lest the tendency, if not realised and checked, should resolve itself into this, that an uninteresting patient, whatever his needs, must be handed over to the care of untrained or partially-trained attendants because the most skilled withhold their services. We hope that though this reproach can with justice be levelled at individual nurses it will never be true of them as a class.

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