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Editorial.

PATIENTS TO ORDER.

Are private nurses losing their briskness? There was a time when it was a point of honour with them to get off to a case as quickly as possible after the call for their services came, and when they lived with their boxes packed, and so were ready to start at very short notice, as well as to catch any train, whether late at night or early in the morning, which would take them as soon as possible to those who needed their services.

At the present day the virus of self-indulgence appears to have infected the private nurse also, and it is not infrequent for a nurse to consider that all private nursing calls should come only during hours when it is convenient for her to meet them. For instance, a nurse does not think she can catch an early morning train—early, signifying perhaps, 8 o'clock—the reason being that “we don’t have breakfast till then.” Or, she says, “I don’t know if I can catch such and such a train, I have my box to pack, and I haven’t had lunch yet,” later in the day she feels aggrieved because the call is “to-night.” Yet, if a nurse worthy of her name stops to think she surely will not deliberately place her own personal comfort before the welfare of the patient to whom she is summoned. It must be remembered that the majority of cases to which private nurses are summoned are in the first instance acute ones, in which it is imperative that they should be on the spot as soon as possible. In our opinion it is just as much a part of a private nurse’s duty to so order her affairs as to be able to start immediately on receipt of a call as to know her work thoroughly. She should have the bulk of the things she will require ready packed, so that she will only have to add a

few toilet necessaries before her box is ready, and, as regards meals, surely if the necessity of the case demands, she can provide herself with a meal to take in the train without waiting for the regular lunch or dinner hour. Adaptability is one of the first requisites in a private nurse, and if a nurse is so constituted that whatever happens she must have her meals at a certain time, and her night’s rest secured to her, even when emergency demands that patients—who unfortunately cannot arrange to be ill to order, at hours to suit the nurse’s convenience—shall receive immediate attention, then it is obvious that though she may be suitable for institution life, her vocation is not private nursing.

A straw shows which way the wind blows, and a nurse who cannot accommodate herself to the small inconveniences occasioned by speedily catching a train is not particularly likely to accommodate herself readily to the different arrangements of the various houses she enters, and it is just because some nurses are “difficult” in conforming to the ways of a household that they get a bad name, though they may nurse the patient most skilfully, and do their work thoroughly conscientiously.

The fact is, that there is something in the frequent luxury of their surroundings which seems to incapacitate many private nurses, after a while, for the rough and tumble of life. They expect all their cases to be picked for them, and unpleasant ones to be kept out of their way, or else they find some reason for giving them up as speedily as possible. Yet to act in this way is to miss the whole meaning of their profession which calls upon them to serve the sick whenever and wherever the need for their services exists, putting the necessities of the patient always before any personal consideration whatsoever.

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