

### Some Aspects of Night Nursing.

"Do you mean to say she never sees daylight?"

The question was addressed to a probationer with reference to the Night Superintendent.

The ideas of the uninitiated concerning the life and duties of a night nurse are sometimes so extremely vague and hazy, that the question amused, rather than astonished, the one addressed. To be "up all night" seems to them the very acme of wretchedness, associated only with gloom, depression, and fatigue! We, the initiated, know that is not, by any means, all this; there is another, a much brighter side to it, some aspects of which, give night nursing the advantage over day nursing, and I should like to point out some of the advantages as they appear to me.

First, then, is the opportunity which the stillness of the night affords, for reading, when the patient sleeps, and is not so ill as to require constant and watchful attention all night.

On occasions, there is absolutely nothing to disturb one's thoughts.

What to read depends, of course, entirely upon the taste and mood of the individual nurse.

"Some books are meant to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested."

When one has not slept much during the day, and comes on duty, therefore, somewhat tired, one's mental digestion will not stand anything stronger than a very light amusing story, which is easily *swallowed*, and it is perhaps the only antidote, not excepting the irresistible cup of tea, against that subtle foe, sleepiness, which *will* assail the night nurse in the early hours of the morning.

A good measure of sleep, and an appetite for breakfast, strengthens one's mental capacity, and if one has a taste for such things, more solid literature can be *chewed and digested*, if the house provides such; in any case one can generally manage to squeeze a book or two into one's trunk, to make sure of having something to read; besides, there are lending libraries in most places—even in villages—of a sort.

Now, day nurses—especially in hospital wards—have not this advantage, and I have heard some sigh over it. They are on their feet more or less all day, except for their two hours' recreation, and if they are wise they will spend that in the open air. There are few opportunities for reading, except in bed,

and the stringent rules of a hospital don't admit of lights after curfew.

Possibly, some people spend their lives without ever seeing the sun rise, although they will become rapturous over a sunset. If the window of the sick room faces east—due east—which is quite incorrect according to the unwritten laws of Nursing—then the night nurse has her innings if she wishes it. To peep behind the blind, and see a great ball of fire rolling up over the horizon, scattering the grey clouds of dawn, and flooding the landscape with a soft light, compensates the night nurse in a large measure for having been "up all night."

Why! far from "never seeing daylight," we see the very best of it, the first fruits of it, the very *essence* of it. Added to this, the air—the purest air—is filled with the song of birds "pouring out their full hearts in profuse strains of unpremeditated art," a matinal serenade to the sun—a paean of praise if you will. To look and listen silently thrills and exhilarates one.

I feel at such a moment so enviable, so in tune with myself and all the world, I feel as if I could forgive all my enemies—even the maid who calls me to get up when I have not slept! It makes me forget that I grumbled to myself a few hours ago, that night nursing was horribly disagreeable; it makes me wish I could remain in that nice mood always! Alas! The spell does not last long. It is soon broken by the prosaic, commonplace sounds of life, such as the servants of the house coming down, and the milk cart in the street.

By and bye, as the sun rises higher in the sky, and in spite of drawn blinds, he will find an entrance through any crack or opening, little motes, like his messengers, dance about the room, and, if one happens to intercept their path, one watches with an instinctive sense of pleasure the play of colours on one's hand or gown.

These are little things may be, but, in spite of oneself, they uplift the mind, and make the heart of the tired night nurse glad.

I suppose few night nurses go to bed before they have taken a walk; if they wish to keep well for the sake of their patients as well as their own, they will certainly do this.

The day is still young, and, if it is spring or early summer, the sun's rays are tempered at this time of the year by a not too ungentle wind, the trees are clothed with their fresh green foliage, and the fruit trees, with their exquisite blossoms; then there is often the

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