

Some Compensations in Nursing.

Several years ago, when actively engaged in nursing, and meeting many nurses, I noticed amongst them a prevailing tendency to dwell on the hardships and drawbacks which are inseparable from private nursing, and to lose sight entirely of the advantages peculiar to their work. Such a spirit is morally and physically devitalising, and must mar the quality of their work. Perhaps its prevalence is due to the fact that nurses so often are quite ignorant of the conditions ruling other callings for women. To me the chief drawback to nursing as a profession lies in the difficulty of observing for oneself the laws of health in all sorts and conditions of houses, and this eventually affects the health, and limits the term of the working years. But undoubtedly much of the over-strained health common amongst private nurses is due to their indulgence in exhausting pleasures when they should be resting. Desire is strong, and self-denial is hard, so the former frequently rules during off-duty time.

If one considers the life of a private governess, which, year after year, is subordinate to the often deplorably ignorant régime of her employer; of the resident school governess under the same disadvantage, with the addition of bad feeding and overwork; of the typist and clerk compelled to sit for hours daily in a poisonous atmosphere; of the shop girl in a similar atmosphere, and forced to stand for an injurious number of hours; of the dress-maker whose work ruins her eyesight and her nervous system; and the lives of many other types of working women who all labour under conditions which wring the heart of one who sees far, then nurses may congratulate themselves on the relative individual liberty to live aright which they enjoy.

There is nothing in this world more comforting, more uplifting, when one is under pressure than the law of compensation; and a full recognition of polarity is worth a fortune to those whose lives are not laid in ways of ease. As Emerson has said, "For everything you have missed, you have gained something else; and for everything you gain, you lose something."

There are several advantages presented in nursing which cannot be found in other forms of women's work. What unique opportunities the private nurse has for putting into practice her ideals. She has to a greater or lesser extent a free hand in the organisation of her work. - Very often it is given her to set before the patient's friends for the first time the standard of the work and character of the trained nurse. What an opportunity for a

nurse with high ideals! The stone is thrown into the smooth surface, the ripples break and extend on and outward until they reach the shores of infinity. That privilege of being the first to impress the smooth surface of a mind, on any given subject, is not to be held lightly.

In domestic matters the gain and interest are perennial. In almost every house some new economy, or habit of thrift may be acquired, or may be introduced. In all houses some new domestic plan may be offered and welcomed, new foods brought into notice, novel cookery recipes may be exchanged, ideas on all that constitutes a home may be given and received; until after a few years' private practice a nurse may be richly endowed with the knowledge that goes to the making of a perfect home. Not the least useful part of the experience is that which warns her what not to do, and what not to be. Indeed, a nurse, if she maintain a receptive and broad attitude of mind, may find her work the finest of schools, and may ultimately become one of the wisest of women.

Then there is the benefit of constant change of scene and air, which outweighs whatever monotony the work holds. The continual change of society lightens much of the irritation caused by the uncongenial folk with whom one is thrown at times; for one can bear with equanimity for a few weeks a great deal that would seem intolerable if the forbearance were to create a precedent for a term of years. This encourages, too, the growth of hopefulness when conditions are, for the time being, really adverse.

To those nurses—and the number is yearly increasing—who are students of sidereal philosophy, what unique opportunities are given for studying the zodiacal types of humanity, which in illness discard the obscuring veil of convention.

What delightful chances of inspecting, and learning the history of treasures in rare old laces, china, paintings, or old books, come to the nurse in almost every cultured home. On the other hand, in many homes such treasures exist unappreciated, and it may be the nurse's privilege to explain their value to the owner. Such a pleasure has more than once fallen to my own lot, and I have enjoyed something of the sensation of having bestowed a valuable gift, and of watching its tonic effect, on a convalescent! Sometimes one has the good fortune to have as patients experts in various branches of art or science. Such are usually willing and happy to impart something from their stores of knowledge to the intelligent and responsive questioner, and such opportunities

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)