

trifling, when taken individually, but that make all the difference to the comfort of the sick and the tone of the ward, they will naturally respect her feelings, and fall in with her arrangements. Towards her patients a nurse should never lose a certain courtesy, that is equally far removed from familiarity as from pride—an unconscious courtsey that will make it impossible for her to take advantage of her position to be unduly curious as to his private life and private affairs, that will never let her be guilty of a certain vulgar pretension to superiority to which uncultured nurses are very prone, yet will make him feel that he must give her the respect and obedience due to her office and sex. A rough and ready manner may, and often does, cover the kindest heart, yet it is quite possible to be kind hearted and not bury it under a bearish exterior.

“Je n'avais jamais souffert,” says a French writer, “et je trouvais dans le sourire discret provoqué par la faiblesse ou la vanité de l'homme une certaine philosophie. Cette habitude la blessait, et je la lui sacrifiai peu à peu. . . . Les bons doivent être simplement bons; toute pointe de moquerie implique un reste de vanité et de défi personnel qu'on finit par trouver de mauvais goût.”

Who does not know the nurse with the keen, witty tongue, who is ever ready with a caustic sarcasm at the expense of another's “weakness” or “vanity”? She can talk for a quarter of an hour with some patient's friends, and come back to her fellow-nurses with such a bright and amusing description of the “touching meeting” between the woman and her husband; describing with minute raillery the uncouth efforts at consolation, the awkward embraces and demonstrations of affection. Such a nurse will readily “take off” the ignorance of the women and the vanity of the male patients; she is quicker to note and comment on the little oddities of her surgeon than his skill, sister's little peculiarities than her kind heart; for each and all their weaknesses she has a quick eye, and is always ready with the veiled sarcasm that shall wound. Under the control of the kindest of hearts a quick perception of the ridiculous is a dangerous gift, and when joined to a caustic, unloving spirit and the tongue that wounds in sport, it will more surely embitter its owner's life than the softer failings of her less clever sister.

It is so easy for a clever young nurse to be witty—she has been considered so amusing at home—it is so difficult now to restrain from mimicking and laughing at so much around her, it is so easy to be sharp with some dull nurses, to let fly a sarcastic speech that stings where only half understood at a grumpy patient; her little anecdotes are very amusing, but they leave a stinging sensation behind them, an uneasy feeling that all is not quite right. She is kind enough to bodily pain, but she does not consider the irritation of mind that follows on a sharp word,

or a passing jeer at some foible in those who are weak and unable to retort. After a certain age especially, people's foibles become a part of their character, and a very touchy point too, and it is not the nurse's place, whose business is to tend and soothe, to rub her patients up the wrong way. Good manners consist largely in consideration for the feelings of others—good ward manners no less. It is always easy to be witty at another's expense, especially one who is duller or more thin-skinned than we are. To see the bright side of the darkest day is one thing, but to see nothing but that which is comic in life and sorrow, to be unconscious of the difference between bathos and pathos, is to possess a quality that ultimately always jars the finer chords of a refined nature. A nurse should never forget that her patient's mind, especially in chronic and wasting diseases, is more or less out of tune, and requires as careful nursing as does his body, nor should she further forget that her superiors are often worn out with anxiety and responsibility, and that a “soft answer turneth away wrath”—at least that is Solomon's opinion, but she should be careful to use it in the sense he intended, for when a sister comes to a nurse blazing with righteous indignation at her misdeeds, it is *not* soothing to be met with studied politeness, and a sweet smile that says more plainly than words could do, “I can see you are in a bad temper, I know you are intensely irritated, but you need not think for one moment that you are going to upset my equanimity.” It usually has the opposite effect to that with which it is generally credited.

True culture of the heart and head will not only give the insight to others' feelings, but also the capability of using her knowledge with tact and discretion.

A refined and thoughtful woman will never forget that what to her is an everyday occurrence is new and startling to her patient; she puts herself in his place, she thinks and feels for him, not forgetting his weakness and ignorance in her own strength and greater knowledge. It is a pleasure for her to plan better ways of carrying out little points in her duties that will add to his comfort, to use her knowledge and skill for his benefit, not doing her work in a perfunctory manner, but with an appreciation of the delicate shades and minor details that complete the picture.

It is not always easy to grasp the fact that all our learning, our knowledge, our accomplishments only exist to prepare for or strengthen us in our duty in life, and if that self-imposed duty be nursing—then any amusements or distractions that send us back, not refreshed, but dissatisfied, unable to enjoy our work, are harmful; while on the other hand a round of unbroken work will equally cause irritation and gradually it will become tame and distasteful.

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