

greatly needs some recreation, something besides and beyond the bodily rest, to which she is often compelled to give her time "off duty." And the best recreation, I submit, is that which gives her a thorough change of ideas.

Many people think, if a woman gives herself to Nursing, the only change she should take from her ward, should be a walk to church, or possibly a weekly lecture or Bible class; anything else would be profane and unsuitable to her vocation. Now, I believe most earnestly that no one will ever make a really good Nurse, unless she does her work in a truly religious spirit, carrying out the smallest details "as to God, and not to man"; and one of the most refreshing things she can enjoy is the service of our Church, with its beautiful music, and, we will hope, a thoughtful and inspiring sermon. Many hours of rest and comfort have I had in Westminster Abbey and the Temple Church. But our minds are not always attuned to this pitch, nor are such opportunities always available, and there are many minor distractions that afford really healthy recreation for a Nurse.

Sometimes she has an hour or two at liberty, whilst waiting for the physician's or surgeon's visit, and she can get a thorough mental rest, and some real enjoyment, from the last good novel, or a pleasant magazine article. We live so much in a groove, it is well for us to keep our minds enlarged, and in touch with the thoughts of the day. Some Nursing Homes have a small library for their Probationers, but very few Hospitals have anything like a general library for their Nurses.

If such a thing were once started I am sure the nurses would gladly pay a small subscription—say, twopence or sixpence a month—to keep the books in order, and provide a few good magazines. A "recreation" library should contain all the best standard works of fiction—George Eliot, Thackeray, Kingsley, Dickens, &c.—some pleasantly written travels, and, in fact, whatever kind of books the Nurses happen to fancy. Even a "sensation" novel is better than the foolish gossip and chatter in which some Nurses spend their leisure time.

Another recreation is music. Those who are nursing in London and the larger provincial towns can often attend very good concerts at very little expense, and whilst resting their weary limbs, can enjoy sweet harmonies of every kind and degree. Then there is the theatre. Why should not a Nurse, like anyone else, have the refreshment of a hearty laugh, or the intellectual enjoyment of first-rate acting? What can more effectually divert her mind from the anxieties of her ward, than a good play, got up as such are nowadays? Only, I would advise her to avoid tragedies, for of those she has plenty in her work, and it is pleasant memories with which the Nurse should store her mind.

Those whose work lies in country towns can often,

by a short omnibus or railway journey, get out into the woods and fields even in a few hours of leisure, and the smallest knowledge of botany and natural history will lend a charm to these excursions, and make them a real occasion of rest and refreshment; whilst, to the unscientific, there is the pleasure of returning, laden with spoils of flowers and ferns, sure to be greatly appreciated by their patients. For London Nurses, the river steamers are a great help, in enabling them to obtain fresh air without fatigue; and Battersea Park, Greenwich Hospital, and even Kew Gardens on an extra long outing, besides many other pleasant and interesting places, are attainable by this means.

As for "Society," in the ordinary sense of the word, we are, as a rule, debarred from it, by its incompatibility with hospital hours; but a Nurse should not shut herself away from her family and friends, as she thereby loses one of her most valuable recreations, and the opportunity of freshening her ideas, by contact with her fellow creatures, outside of the hospital groove. One thing I must deprecate, and that is the persistency with which strangers, and even her own friends, with whom she may be spending an hour, will turn the conversation upon hospital topics. They should remember she is out for a change, and wants a fresh set of ideas to take back to her patients. It is often a great effort to a nurse to "put on her things" and go out; but she who wishes to keep her health should make the effort, remembering how many hours daily must necessarily be spent in an unhealthy atmosphere. A few of the London hospitals have green spaces, where their nurses can sit out, and get such fresh air as is to be had, and St. Thomas's has a pleasant terrace by the river, but these are exceptional cases.

I have often thought, if some of those dames with carriages, who spend several hours daily driving in the Park, or from shop to shop, would occasionally call at any hospital where they have a friend, and take the poor tired woman for a drive, they would be doing good in more ways than one to the Nurse, and through her to her patients; and last, but not least, perhaps, to themselves, for they, as well as the Nurse, would get a change of ideas.

In conclusion, I would remark, that the Nurse who shuts herself up in her ward, who spends her time "off duty" either dozing on her bed, or gossiping round the hospital; who never opens a book from one year's end to another, but thinks and talks of her ward and her patients without ceasing, must inevitably become a weariness to herself, and to all who have to do with her. Whilst she who takes plenty of healthy recreation, will keep herself bright and well, will have her sympathies ever fresh and ready, and will form a centre, from which will radiate comfort, help, and cheerfulness to all who come in contact with her.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)