

health, proportion the number of meals to the real wants of the system, as indicated by the true returns of appetite. The most salutary monitor of health is not the sense of satiety: this is beyond the point of *healthful* indulgence, and is Nature's earliest indication of an abuse and *over-burden* of her powers to replenish the system. It occurs immediately before this, and may be known by the pleasurable sensation of *perfect satisfaction*, ease and quiescence of body and mind. It is when the stomach says "enough," and is distinguished from the satiety by the difference of the sensations—the former feeling *enough*, the latter *too much*." If this "perfect satisfaction, ease, and quiescence of body and mind" after food be essential to health, how often alas! Nurses fall short of this happy state. Without doubt, Nurses' appetites are capricious, and this must be borne in mind; the nature of their work causes this capriciousness of appetite which is owing, at any rate, in part, to the bad sights, smells, and air of the wards; for in spite of the best ventilation Nurses cannot at all times escape bad smells and bad air. They may in a measure become accustomed to bad sights and bad smells, but still these things affect the appetite. Then, too, the serving of patients' dinners just before the Nurses take their own; the steam and smell from hot broth, from hot meat and potatoes, &c., take off the keen edge of appetite. They go to their dining-room, and see placed before them a large joint of meat, perhaps too much cooked, perhaps not enough; sometimes very good and enjoyable, but often not; and then a few mouthfuls of the badly cooked, but generally good, meat suffice; what was left of appetite flies away, and nearly half of the meat served, is left upon the plates, and wasted.

Dare I go on with this subject of Nurses' diets? for, indeed, there is danger of treading upon the corns of a crowd of people—from the Hospital Board down to the cook. The Nurses, too, whose benefit is intended, may turn the full flood of their wrath upon the writer, for in saying what should be, it may be difficult to keep from saying what should not be.

It does not so much seem to be more food that is wanted for the improvement of Nurses' diet, but more variety in the way of cooking it, and greater nicety in dishing and serving it. It might sometimes be better in quality, but on the whole there is not much fault to be found with either quantity or quality. More variety of meat, and, as I shall mention presently, more puddings, vegetables, and fruit, with less of meat, would not increase the expense of the supply needed, but rather make it smaller; at any rate the waste might be, and probably would be, less, and the benefit to the health and enjoyment of the Nurses would be great.

Nurses have been long-suffering about their food, for they are as a rule the worst fed members of the Hospital staff; they and the servants have about the same diet allowed, but the servants get many little dainties that come from the officers' tables.

Any one who has had experience of Hospital management knows the difficulties there are about the feeding of the Nurses. Perhaps the chief difficulty is with the cook, as she generally will not condescend to believe that any one who is not a cook can teach her anything. But neither as a rule is she anxious to teach herself anything; she is satisfied with just what she knows, and generally the less she knows, the more complete is her satisfaction. So the chief difficulty about more appetising diet for Nurses is not, I imagine, with the Hospital Board, or with the storekeeper, but with the cook. It is, too, essential that where there is a housekeeper as well as a matron, they shall work well together, and be willing to devise and contrive little changes of diet, such as are arranged in private houses. Surely the housekeeper would not object to this, if it were done in a friendly spirit. Two heads may sometimes be better than one, even about such work as this—work that, I was going to say, is apt to become monotonous; but does not any work become monotonous if life and energy and spirit are not infused into it? Surely economy, enjoyment, and health are worth thought and trouble to secure. Good management secures all these, for it prevents waste, secures enjoyment, and at any rate helps to ensure health.

Hospital Nursing cannot be too good, but the present fashion is to exalt it immeasurably above the housekeeping; this is a mistake, for there cannot be thoroughly good Nursing in every respect without good housekeeping also; because only by good housekeeping can the health of the workers be sustained, and the strength of the patients built up. Where there is not a housekeeper, the Matron should on no account look down upon her housekeeping duties, nor begrudge the time spent on them, nor neglect the superintendance of the cooking. Any one who means to be a Matron should take as great pains to learn the theory and practice of cooking, as she should the theory and practice of Nursing. Real practical training in a Hospital kitchen would, as every Matron knows, have lessened the difficulties she has had to contend with, in connection with Hospital meals and Hospital cooking. It is to be hoped the time will come when educated women will undertake this important post of head in the kitchen, for, indeed, the cook's department is every whit as important as a Sister's is. This fact is not sufficiently realised, or there

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)