

from the Ward by the Probationers, two of whom will leave for dinner at 12.30. The Staff Nurse will now make some necessary preparations for the visit of the Visiting Staff, and help to give round basins of warm water to those patients who can wash their own face and hands, helping the Probationers to wash those who are unable to attend to themselves, until 1.15, when they will be relieved for dinner.

Then the two Probationers on duty will spend the next half-hour in going from bed to bed, carefully drawing the sheets, arranging the pillows, and tidying the beds, and again attending to the backs of those patients who require it, the Ward Maid, meanwhile, quickly sweeping the Ward, and dusting prominent surfaces.

At two come the Visiting Staff. The same routine of attending them from bed to bed will again take place, the earnest and observant Nurse gathering in a grand store of knowledge, without any apparent intrusion, from the clinical lectures addressed to the Students. The Ward, probably, will be cleared by four p.m., at which time the patients will be served with tea.

It is in the preparation and arrangements for this meal, that in the majority of Hospitals a great lack of care and sympathy is shown. Amongst the class of patients from which the majority of Hospital patients are recruited, tea is, *par excellence*, the meal of the day, especially in the opinion of the women; and to be served with a stewed decoction of muddy hue, a mixture of luke-warm water, sugar, and milk, made in an urn, and served in a mug, is a sad change from the snug, if homely, little brown teapot, which brews tea of such excellent flavour, and which can at least be procured hot, with milk and sugar to taste, by the majority of the respectable poor.

Why should Hospital patients be deprived of this great comfort? No reason, if Nurses in plenty are provided to wait on them, or, in fact, under any circumstances. Let a small earthenware tea-pot, with jug, sugar basin, and cup and saucer (they are cheap enough, and easily kept clean), be provided for each bed, and placed on the patient's small table at tea-time, in the same way that the necessary articles are provided for his use at dinner. This little luxury has been found to be greatly appreciated in those Hospitals where the custom prevails.

The Nurses will leave the Ward for tea, in turns, half from four to 4.30, half from 4.30 to five. After tea, from five to six, a spell of quiet may be enjoyed, but it is seldom that a Nurse is at liberty to "settle herself" for any length of time, whilst on duty. Each evening brings its routine, and also its special duties—for instance, patients ordered up

for a few hours must now be carefully helped out of bed, well wrapped up, and seated near the fire; or, in a Surgical Ward, splints and dressings, difficult to make, must be prepared, and there are the thousand and one emergencies which each day brings in its train. Some baths must be given nightly, and feet washed at least twice a week, and time must be spared—a regular time—for the cleaning and tidying of cupboards and drawers.

Any way, as the clock strikes six, all Nurses must be on the alert. Two will again perform the routine of bed making, on exactly the same plan as employed in the morning, whilst there are a multitude of duties for the others to perform. Sister or Staff Nurse always being present, they will attend to the most serious cases, giving a helping hand here and there, and doing all such dressings as the inexperienced Probationer may not undertake alone, record the temperatures, give medicines and stimulants, and superintend the bathing, rubbing, poultice making, &c., and the preparation and distribution of the supper, which will consist, like lunch, of milk, cocoa, or beef-tea, and bread and butter. All will be finished by eight p.m., when the Staff Nurse will write her report, which will be found very useful for future reference by the Resident Medical Officer, if he makes a late round, the Night Sister, and by those Nurses who are on night duty. Before evening prayers are read at 8.30, the Probationers on duty will quietly sweep down the centre of the Ward, leaving everything absolutely neat and in order in the Ward, lavatories, and kitchen, and one Nurse only need be retained on duty till nine p.m., when she will be relieved by the Night Nurses.

"Considering the great importance of the Ward-maid," says Sister Doris, "you have not said much about her duties."

"It is because I estimated her work at its true value," I answered, "that I have touched so lightly on her concerns. Don't imagine that I have done victimising you yet awhile. The next time we have an hour to spare, I mean to expatiate on the 'duties of the Night Nurse,' and devote a short space to discussing the affairs of the nation—I mean the Ward-maid. I find the sound of one's own voice is a weakness which grows upon one, as for the sight of one's name in print. I enjoy it so thoroughly, that last night I slept with the *Nursing Record* under my pillow, so that I could gloat over it, with the earliest streak of dawn."

"Amiable weaknesses," laughs Sister Doris, "which you share with many of your superiors. Anyway, your little paper advocates three excellent principles in Ward-management—Method; the necessity of there always being a *responsible* person on duty, yet never for five minutes alone,

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)