

HINTS TO NOVICES, IN PRIVATE NURSING.

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II.—GENERAL MANAGEMENT.

“THERE is a time for all things,” especially in Nursing. Orderly proceeding economises time, and is an assurance against the omission of minor duties. As soon as possible after her arrival a Nurse should commence working systematically, and, unless the patient has a personal attendant, should herself do all necessary cleaning and dusting in the sick rooms; all requisites being placed outside the door by one of the household servants, and being similarly removed after usage. She should provide herself with a pair of strong gloves, to wear while cleaning the fire-place, and, as this duty is seldom allotted to a Probationer in Hospital, a few special hints about fires and fireplaces may be acceptable.

The fire-irons should be sent out of the room at the beginning of the illness, the poker being replaced by an old walking stick; shovel and tongs are quite unnecessary. Arrangements should be made for coals to be sent up in thin paper bags, each holding about two pounds, as many bags as possible being packed in a scuttle to prevent the necessity of frequent replenishment. Care must be taken that there is always an ample supply of fuel for consumption during the night. The combustible constituents of coal are principally carbon and hydrocarbons. When coal is thoroughly consumed, there is a mere residuum of mineral ash, but when decomposed without being effectually burnt, gas—that is to say, undeveloped latent heat—is distilled, and passes off as smoke, depositing soot in the chimney and vitiating the atmosphere. The chemical change (oxydisation) called burning can only be properly effected at a suitable temperature. Sufficient oxygen for the purpose is supplied by a draught of atmospheric air; and gases are burnt as they are distilled, by placing fresh coal *in*, not in a thick layer *upon*, the embers. A few hints on cooking will be given in a future article, and no culinary operation should be performed in the sick room, but it may be here mentioned that all sick cooking should be performed by the aid of a *clear* fire. Nothing is more objectionable than the suspicion of smokiness in a patient's diet. A small supply of dry wood should also be kept in the sick room to revive the fire, should it burn low in the grate.

Early in the morning a Nurse should begin her work, by thoroughly raking out every particle of dust from the fire-place, leaving only red-hot

cinders. Coals should be put on at once, and be lightly stirred among the embers, and the dust placed in the receptacle provided for it in the housemaid's box. The fire-place and fender must then be quickly blackened and brushed over, and the hearth washed. In cases of very severe nervous illness, it is sometimes desirable to cover the whole of the hearthstone to the depth of an inch with fine sand, so that the cinders may fall noiselessly. In this case, the Nurse would remove as much of the dust as she could without noise, and replenish the sand daily. To keep a fire always bright, all dust must be raked out and removed night and morning.

There appears to be an ineradicable idea in the mind of all but the most experienced domestic servants, that the necessities of a “bedroom fire” are fully provided for by two or three scoopful of coal enclosed in a voluminous wrapper of defunct literature.

The floor of the sick room is easily kept free from dust by using a damp (not wet) mop under the bed, and a damp wash-leather for the carpet. The wash-leather will need rinsing two or three times, which may be done quietly by keeping both hands under water while wringing. Having thoroughly tidied her room, performed her patient's toilet, and attended to all his wants, the Nurse should go to her own room, take a bath, and dress leisurely. If the Doctor's morning visit is so timed that she can take an hour's exercise in the fresh air before his arrival, she will do well to do so, even though she can go no further than the confines of a small suburban garden. Her time of sleep must be taken when she is least likely to be urgently wanted; from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. is the time when a Nurse's duties are generally lightest, and when a competent member of the household can most easily be spared to relieve her.

Before retiring, a detailed time-table of all that is to be done in her absence should be placed in the hands of her deputy, and if it is anticipated that the Doctor may call during her repose, a written report, to be given him on his arrival, should be left. It is not conducive to her health and efficiency, for a Nurse to allow her rest to be disturbed for trivial causes, though many people are evidently under the impression that one of the peculiar physiological results of “training” is a contempt, if not actual distaste, for unbroken rest of any longer duration than two or three hours.

In private cases, a Nurse must take care of herself, for she has no longer the protection of Hospital rules, nor has she the thoughtful supervision of a Sister, to see that she does not overtax her natural resources. Some people are so thought-

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