

Hints to Private Nurses.

THE WORK, AND THE PERSON.

By Miss E. J. R. LANDALE.

OF all the branches of our profession which require perfection of training, discipline of character, and cultivation of mind, I would place first the post of Head Nurse in a Workhouse Infirmary, and next to that the Private Nurse.

The general public has only a vague idea of what they hope for in a Nurse; medical men only judge from what they see, and they generally see the best, and only a temporary "best," for the worst Nurse thinks she may be dependent on them for work: and it requires some experience for a Superintendent to realise all that a Private Nurse should be. Would that more Nurses understood it! And, that before undertaking the work of private nursing they considered what the scope of the work really is. It embraces every kind of illness, patients of every social position, work in every kind of household, from the most wealthy to the poor lodging, with only a maid-of-all-work. Of what width must the professional knowledge and experience be, of the Nurse who must be as ready to nurse a typhoid, as a child with whooping cough! What must be the personal character of the woman who is equally capable of managing a crotchety old man, or a school girl, an hysterical lady or a child, the young heir who has been the most important person in the large establishment, or the kitchen-maid whom they have not time to think of? Consider the discretion she needs to take her place with dignity, and yet without assertiveness, in the household of ten or fifteen servants, and the tact and resource she requires when there is but one, and when small means are heavily taxed by the extra expense of illness. If Nurses would only consider these things, many who now rush into private work, would remain longer in hospital, where the very routine and discipline they find irksome are their best safeguards.

The life of a Private Nurse is full of temptation, and especially to those who do not work under a Superintendent. Feeling themselves dependent for their daily bread on the good word of their employers, expediency often obscures their vision of right and wrong. Rules which they make for themselves are easily broken. The employers hardly ever look at things from the Nurse's point of view. Take for instance, the most common difficulty a Nurse has, that of getting rest and fresh air. I have known of a Nurse being kept in attendance on an acute case for thirty-six hours, and then the doctor advising that she should remain on

another twelve, and be given brandy and water, or even champagne, in order to enable her to keep up. A very short-sighted policy on the part of the doctor one would think! But what neither doctors nor employers seem to remember is, that the Nurse's work does not end when their necessity is over, and that they have no right to exhaust her strength. She must be ready to go to another patient when she leaves them. Some people seem to think they are justified in taking all they can out of a Nurse, but they would be far from pleased if a tired and worn-out woman came to them. A Private Nurse has to be prepared to meet this aspect of mind in her employers. It arises largely from the fact that people do not think, but when the facts are made plain to them, most are reasonable enough to see the force of the Nurse's argument. Nurses working for themselves would do well to have a short rule printed, and on arrival, to hand a copy to the person in charge of every house they go to. Those who have the protection of an associated rule should be most loyal in keeping it, for the sake of others, as well as for the honour of loyalty.

There are some qualifications necessary for every Nurse, of which I have spoken in my lectures to Probationers, and which I wish to insist upon as most necessary in private nursing, if the Nurse is to be all the comfort she ought to her patient, and a reliable assistant to the medical man in charge of the case—qualifications which must be developed and matured, and which no woman can call herself a "trained" Nurse till she has, in some measure, acquired.

(1) Quietness; (2) presence of mind; (3) accuracy (punctuality); (4) gentleness; (5) memory; (6) observation; (7) forethought; (8) promptness; (9) obedience; are the qualities I have always tried to impress upon my Probationers as necessary. For the Private Nurse I would add another, reticence; and I desire to lay special stress on her having well cultivated powers of observation, presence of mind and accuracy, with great gentleness of manner; and not manner only but gentleness of heart, for she needs something deeper seated in her nature than "manner" which may be put on in the sick-room. We want there a woman with a gentle heart and a quiet soul—that is the truly helpful and restful Nurse. Of the practical use of these qualifications in the various relations of the work, I hope to speak hereafter, but there are some directly personal matters to which it is very necessary to give attention before going further.

You have a duty to yourself in which, it is true, your patient is much concerned. You are bound

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