

not difficult to imagine. Backs strained by lifting heavy patients are not unknown. In one case which occurs to my mind at the moment, a young girl so hurt her back in lifting a patient that she became an invalid, miserably condemned to sofas for a long period; and it was only at the end of thirteen years that she felt her health sufficiently restored to return to her profession and complete her training. This is an extreme instance, I am aware, and too much stress need not be laid upon it. But the regular work of a Hospital Nurse is so hard that almost invariably those young girls who have not been brought up to hard work—ladies, in fact—collapse under it. If they would but confess it, young Nurses run far more risk of illness from sheer overwork than they do from infection, even though their work may lie in the Fever Wards.

“For a girl who at home is accustomed to rise not earlier than eight, and to employ herself till lunch with little or no physical effort in various home duties, and in the afternoon to take no severer exercise than a couple of sets of tennis, or, maybe, a run on her tricycle—for such a one, I say, suddenly to plunge into the awful drudgery of Hospital work is madness. Contrast with this programme an ordinary day’s work in the Hospital. The young Nurse must get up at five or six every day to work before breakfast, maybe, or at any rate to work twelve hours a day, with brief allowance of time for meals; she is allowed out not oftener than twice a week for a couple of ‘hours’ fresh air; and all this regular routine is diversified only by an occasional turn of night duty. Of course our young girls cannot stand it, and they don’t. It would require the strength and muscular endurance of a healthy woman of thirty-five. Against all this it may perhaps be urged that girls are themselves the best judges of their own capabilities, and that eventually they will work out their own salvation, if only through the simple yet effective means of killing off the weaker ones. And were this objection of overwork, grave as it is, the only one, I too should be willing to let them learn by experience.

“But there is yet another, a more serious and a more delicate objection, and one which seems to be ignored by all with singular unanimity. This is the indiscriminate Nursing of men by young girls. The indelicacy of men Doctors for women has been often and loudly insisted upon by numbers of people; while the rapid increase of lady Doctors, both in this country and in America, would seem to show that the feeling gains ground. Now, let any man who has had the misfortune to be seriously ill call up to his recollection what were the duties performed daily and hourly by the Nurse, and then let him say if he candidly

thinks that they were such as could be properly assigned to a young woman. It is only fashion which could so blind us to all sense of propriety as to permit it for a moment. Fashion, like a powerful mesmerist, seems to have the faculty of throwing its votaries into a hypnotic state, in which they do not appear to see or feel anything but the influence imparted to them. What could be more simple and suitable than a staff of male Nurses for the army? Women possibly are born Nurses; but all the same there is no insurmountable reason why men should not be taught to become Nurses. Men can be as gentle and deft as women: what hand is as tender in its handling as that of a Doctor?

“A lady much interested in Nursing, when recently discussing the subject with me, observed that some Nursing Associations had adopted the title of Sister, ‘as being a little less awkward, you know.’ That is, it makes the relationship of patient and Nurse a little more bearable when the respective rôles are taken, for example, by a young officer of twenty-five, and a young girl of twenty-two. Consider the situation indicated, and see if it is not one of very strained relationship, to say the least. A young man, attended by a girl who lives for weeks in his room, the circumstance that she occupies a couch beside his bed being possibly among the least trying of the duties she has to perform. In times of great exigency, such as war, when all the men are demanded for sterner duties, let girls go to the front to nurse the wounded, with hearts empty of all emotion, save an overwhelming pity. But in ordinary times let girls be Nurses to women and children; there is no work more suitable for them, provided they have health and strength for it.

“But it may be objected that such a restriction will greatly limit the field for Nurses. Women and children do not constitute more than two-thirds of the ranks of patients. Very well, let the remaining third fall to the share of male Nurses, and no doubt many men will be glad to avail themselves of a new opening in the struggle for life. If there be still girls left who pine for work, and yet cannot be absorbed in the women’s and children’s Hospitals, then, instead of being girl-Nurses, let them be Nurse-girls. There is an opening for an almost indefinite number. Let the young lady who thinks of going into a Hospital offer herself as Nurse to a private family. She would find the work light in comparison with Hospital work; the pay would be as good, and the position in many ways preferable. What an unspeakable boon it would be to mothers to be able to confide their infants to refined ladies, whose characters were above suspicion of lying, stealing, or drunkenness, instead of being dependent upon the lowest and

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