

## The Old Nursing and the New.\*

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As a valedictory to the graduating class of Nurses, I thought it would probably be interesting and might be useful, to tell something of the old nursing and the new. In doing this, I shall confine myself very much to what I have seen, and not attempt to give you an exact and statistical history, such as might be compiled from a study of records.

At the outset, let me beg you not to be too much elated by what I shall tell you of the wonderful changes for the better that have been accomplished, but remember that most excellent results were achieved in the old days, notwithstanding the crude methods and small force of nurses. Among the old-fashioned nurses, I have known many, both men and women, who in their devotion to duty, in their industry, and in the true charity that they manifested to the sick, might well be compared with the best of the workers of to-day.

It is a little more than thirty years, since as a youth entering upon the study of medicine, I began to frequent the wards of the Hospital, and on the first of October, 1872, I came here to live in the capacity of Resident Physician. I lived here for eighteen months, which was the full term of service at that time. The whole of this period was before the beginning of any of the changes in the method of nursing, which have since been made. I had, therefore, a good opportunity to see the old system, and to study the results obtained by it.

The strangest thing of all in the old days was that there was no central authority in control of the nursing; there was no Head Nurse. In explanation of this, it might be said that all the employees of the Hospital were subject to the authority of the Steward, who was the supreme executive head. Ordinarily, the men nurses were employed and discharged by the Steward, and the women by the Matron; but the Matron could do little, and seldom attempted much without first consulting the Steward. In regard to matters of housekeeping, these two authorities made themselves very much felt. They ruled the Institution with a rod of iron; but in regard to the actual nursing, they concerned themselves but little, and meddled with that department only when something occurred which they could not overlook. The Hospital was divided into six wards, and each ward was an independent kingdom in itself, but there was not even a single king in

each of these, for the day-nurse and the night-nurse were quite independent of one another; the one ruling from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., and the other from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. To give you an idea of the administration, let me describe to you the men's medical ward. It contained at that time forty beds, and there were employed in its care during the day two men-nurses, a ward-maid and a cook. At night, one man was in charge of the whole medical ward, containing forty beds, and of the surgical ward in the floor above, which was of the same capacity, but extended into the centre of the building and the west wing. There were eight rooms, in which were patients whose welfare he was expected to oversee during the night. The medical ward was, therefore, cared for by two men and two women during the day, and during the night received one-half the attention of one man. At that time, all of what was called the extra diet was cooked in the ward in which it was used, each ward having its own kitchen. The cook of the men's medical ward, therefore, did little but take care of the kitchen and refrigerator, with which each ward was provided, cook the food, and help in the ward dining room. The maid cleaned the wards as well as she could and did the general work. The two men and two women had to carry the linen from the Laundry, and themselves go to the various store-rooms and to the apothecary shop for all the supplies they required. They received no outside help, except some little, in transporting food from the central kitchen at meal times.

The method of cleaning at that day was one which seems strange to us now. The floors were of undressed wood, and there was not any carpet. The wards were dusted every day as well as could be done, but no water was used. This was all, except for what was called the Monthly Cleaning, which took place during the week before the Manager's Meeting. The process was one which filled the souls of the doctors with disgust and dread. A band of women who belonged to a species which is now nearly as extinct as some of the alligators known to geologists, was let loose in the wards. These women were of the class which was known in Philadelphia as house-cleaners, and most of them were stalwart negroes. Four or five of them would come into a ward with mops and brushes and buckets of water, and after having turned out every patient, no matter how sick, they splashed the floor and walls, and even the ceilings for several hours before they moved on to another attack. You can imagine the confusion in the smaller rooms of the men's medical ward during the time these cleaners were in possession of the large long ward. The convalescent patients were huddled here and there in unhappy looking groups, while those who

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