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Editorial.

HOSPITAL SHOW.

"This ward is not one of the show wards of the hospital," said a Sister to us recently, "but I think the patients are well nursed." The remark set us thinking. The ward was bright, cheery, and homely; the floor polished till it reflected like glass the ruddy light of the fire; the tables were spotless, and the flowers had been arranged by deft fingers, so that they seemed almost as if they grew in the quaint bowls and vases in which they were arranged; the ward was a pleasant place in which to be ill, but it lacked, certainly, the profusion of ornamentation and the wealth of floral decoration which are such conspicuous features in some hospitals. "I do not believe in too many trimmings," said the Sister; "the time devoted to them should be spent on the patients if they are to have the best attention possible." It is not so long ago since hospitals were bare and repellent, and the sick, who are keenly sensitive, instinctively shrank from them. Perhaps no one is so appreciative of dainty surroundings, and bright and harmonious colours, as a sick person, and this the modern nurse has realised. Under her benign influence white-washed walls have received coats of warm or pleasant colouring; splashes of vivid red have been introduced by means of screens covered with Turkey twill; Covent Garden has been spoiled to provide flowers for the ward tables, and the friends of patients, noting the pleasure that flowers give alike to patient and nurse, bring both plants and cut blossoms, until the ward is almost transformed into a conservatory.

Within limits this is good, and a return to the barrenness of fifty years ago is inconceivable. But is there not a possibility of the pendulum swinging too much in the opposite direction? In our pride of ward, do we always remember that it exists primarily for the use and comfort of the patients? Is there not some danger of considering the patients as a decoration to the ward? Put into language so blunt, every

nurse will hasten to deny the suggestion, but it is worth thinking over.

Once keep in mind as an underlying principle that the good nursing of the patients is the one thing of paramount importance, and that the decoration, though not the cleanliness, of the ward must take a secondary place, and everything else will fall into line. If the symmetry of the ward demands that patients shall not have the bedclothes cosily tucked round them, in the way which we ourselves know the comfort of, then we shall see that they are provided with flannel jackets or nightgales, so that their shoulders are kept warm and covered. If the "bed-tails" are to be faultlessly straight, we shall plead for ends to the beds, so that a restless patient may be able to move his feet without eliciting a reproachful "Oh, daddy!" from the nurse who darts at his bed-tail and re-arranges it. To please her, for she is "real good" to him, he endeavours to keep his feet still, but, poor man, he has the "fidgets," the task seems well-nigh impossible, and he may be excused for wondering why his bed-tail seems to nurse a matter of such supreme importance, and his own comfort of secondary account. A good nurse will also see to it that the draw sheet upon which a patient lies is frequently drawn, is free from creases, cool and comfortable, as well as that the "show sheet" is immaculately smooth. She will be sure that the hair, which it is her delight to tie up with blue ribbon, is scrupulously clean, and that the pad for a splint is comfortable for an injured limb as well as being a work of art. Again, in applying a fomentation, her principal concern will be that this is really hot, and that the bandage which keeps it in place is easily removable. It is misplaced energy to cover a tepid fomentation with an elaborate specimen of the art of bandaging, or to secure a dressing frequently changed at night by elaborate means. "Hospital show" should always be of secondary importance, the welfare of the patients is the main consideration.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)