

not exaggerate when I say it is generally well done, and that the nurse gives more than she gets; money cannot pay for the skill which brings to the bedside renewed health and strength, and, perhaps, even the "sweet boon of life."

If she have fought with death and dulled his sword,  
If she have given back our sick again,  
Is it a little thing that she has wrought?  
Then life and death and motherhood are naught!

And at the gates of life and death should not an earnest, Christian woman stand by the bed?

Many an otherwise good nurse is undesirable, because she has a flippant manner, or because her mind is choked with the cares of this world; dress is often a stumbling block, preventing the saving of money and taking much of the nurse's thought and time, making it impossible to have

"A mind at leisure from itself,  
To soothe and sympathise."

The life of a nurse is a hard one, especially that of a private nurse. She has many trials and temptations—long, monotonous days and nights, the unreasonable relations of the patient, and the quarrelsome servants, a burden of anxiety, and very hard work besides; and what has she to look forward to between cases? As a rule, a dreary boarding-house, often overcrowded—say in a room with one double bed, which belongs to three nurses—or two beds rented by four. This is not uncommon in Philadelphia, at least. Under these conditions, if nursing is simply a means to an end, how can the enthusiasm and unflinching sympathy and patience last, if the woman has a worldly heart and mind? Then there is the patient's side; surely it is important to have in the house a nurse who nurses with the "head and heart," pure-hearted, pure-minded, with high ideals and lofty standards?

Florence Nightingale says:—

"Nursing is an art, and if it is to be made an art it requires as exclusive a devotion, as hard a preparation as any painter's or sculptor's work, for what is having to do with dead canvas or cold marble compared with having to do with the living body—the temple of God's Spirit? It is one of the fine arts; I had almost said the finest of the fine arts." I feel I touch on dangerous ground when I say that occasionally women whose lives are not above reproach do enter the nursing ranks; but that such is the case is beyond doubt, and is one of the strongest pleas for my cause. I need not enlarge upon the dreadful opportunities that it gives such women to enter closely into the home life of our best people. What is the remedy of these evils? I frankly say I do not know, but my suggestion and thought is that a nursing order be established—call it what you will, sisterhood or deaconesses, where its members could enter for a certain number of years—say not less

than six, and where a rigidly distinctive dress be worn, and a life of religious discipline lived, with the same hospital training that is now given as a preliminary, or after a year spent in the order.

Dr. Osler, in 1897, made the following suggestion:

"An organised nursing guild, similar to the German deaconesses, could undertake the care of large or small institutions, without the establishment of training-schools in the ordinary sense of the term. Such a guild might be entirely secular, with St. James, the apostle of practical religion, as the patron. It would be of special advantage to smaller hospitals, particularly those unattached to medical schools, and it would obviate the existing anomaly of scores of training-schools, in which the pupils cannot get an education in any way commensurate with the importance of the profession. In the period of their training, the members of the Nursing Guild could be transferred from one institution to another until their education was complete. Such an organisation would be of inestimable service in connection with district nursing. The noble work of Theodore Fliedner should be repeated at an early day in this country. The Kaiserwerth Deaconesses have shown the world the way. I doubt if we have progressed in secularism far enough successfully to establish such guilds apart from Church organisations. The religion of humanity is thin stuff for women, whose souls ask for something more substantial upon which to feed."

A large house with a superior sister or deaconess, who would manage the nursing sisters' lives and look after their interests and comforts. I doubt if many people realise what the loneliness of a private nurse in a large city is, and what possible temptations come to a young and attractive woman who has no one to protect or care for her. I have had glimpses of what it can be from the nurses' own lips, and I know whereof I speak. There is no unity among private nurses; it is generally each one for herself, or a few for each other. I will only say in conclusion that while skill and conscientiousness are the most important things in nursing, and that not even religious fervour can make up for incompetency, given an equal education and intelligence, the good woman—in other words, the Christian woman—makes the highest type of nurse, the woman who can be depended upon to be absolutely honest in words and purpose, unfaltering in her devotion to duty, dignified, and gentle in conduct, the woman who can say from her heart:

Oh, Lord, my God! This work I undertake  
Alone in Thy great Name and for Thy sake.  
In ministering to suffering I would learn  
The sympathy that in Thy heart did burn  
For those who on life's weary way  
Unto diseases divers are a prey.  
Take, then, mine eyes, and teach them to perceive  
The ablest way each poor one to relieve;

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)