

hospital with a sufficient number of beds to make the course inclusive.

It is pointed out that a very young woman is not suitable for the work in an ordinary hospital ward, where the arduous character of the work needs both the mind and body to be fully developed (when is the mind fully developed, by the bye?). There is often, therefore, a question as to how a girl who intends to be a nurse should fill up the years which must intervene between schooldays and the date at which she can enter a hospital for training. The answer to this is good. "If possible, at some definite business, where there are regular duties to fulfil, regular hours to keep, and where neatness, method, quickness, and punctuality are necessary. The one thing she should not do during these years is to dawdle about at home idly amusing herself, and letting others wait upon her and do all the real work of the house. A girl can be placed in no circumstances in which she cannot cultivate the virtues, so essential in hospital, of helpfulness, patience, quickness, tact, and neatness. The fewer bad habits she has to eradicate in the wards, the more time she will find for learning what can only be taught there; and she can learn at home quite as well as anywhere else how to walk about on uncarpeted floors quietly, how to keep a room neat and clean, and how to shut a door securely without banging it."

We hope that paragraph may meet the eye of many indulgent mothers, who are too lazy or too weak to train their own daughters in the way they should go, and then expect their thriftless progeny when shuffled off into a hospital to be found first-class material for the making of nurses.

Again: "Nurses have often noticed that there is a great change in the character of every probationer after six months' life in hospital. There is some rubbing off of angles, some approximation to the general standard of the place, some levelling up and down. There is a great tendency in life in a community to take one another for standards, to think there is no need to be anything better than one's fellows, to lose, in fact, the ideals with which the work was taken up. This is especially the case with girls who have left home for the first time. They enjoy the independence of their new life and the freedom from control of their off-duty hours, and they let themselves go slack, saying and doing things that they would not say or do at home, and affecting a scorn of 'things lovely and of good report' till, perhaps, what begins as a freak ends as a settled habit, and their whole character is deteriorated. But there is not the least need that the alteration should be for the worse. Things that nurses are obliged to see and hear talked of in the wards need not make them coarse in speech and ideas, and association with persons more roughly

brought up than themselves should only make them remember more than ever that *noblesse oblige*."

Teach nurses *noblesse oblige* from a professional standpoint and we shall hear little more of the pettifoggling faults of which they are just now so roundly accused.

PRIVATE NURSING.

"What was written many years ago," quotes the Guide, "by a physician of Guy's Hospital, although it was said with regard to the medical profession, might well be taken as a standard of daily work by anyone who wants to be a thorough private nurse. 'We have to be,' he says, 'as it were, resting harbours, where the broken minds of the sick may refit with every mental strength; and we must be ready to give aid to every shaken faculty; we must be ready to create faith—that greatest of tonics—for the unbelieving, and hope—that best of stimulants—for the despairing; we must find fresh interest for the weary of life, and not merely know a few things which others are ignorant of.'"

To private nurses "it remains to prove that gentleness can go with presence of mind, and real sympathy with practical helpfulness." Amongst other items of useful advice to private nurses, they are reminded that "great talkers are great bores; when the subject of their conversation is their own doings. A nurse should avoid talking about her health (most invalids take an interest only in their own)."

DISTRICT NURSING.

"To those who find their fellow-men the most interesting study, and whose impulse or desire it is to succour the weakest and to help those who are least able to help themselves, there must be a two-fold attraction in working in the homes of the poor. In hospital one knows one's patients to a certain extent, in private nursing to a much greater extent, but perhaps the district nurse gets to the root of things more than any, because with the people among whom she works ceremony is unknown, and reticence a rarely-found quality. This is one of the many reasons why, to some nurses, district nursing, with all its drawbacks, is by far the most fascinating work. One sees the people exactly as they are, and as they live—not washed and brushed and in tidy hospital clothes, with their manners accommodating themselves, as they generally do, to the new surroundings, but in all the details of their ordinary everyday life, the dark and sordid side of life made a little darker, or the bright lights of patience and courage also shown up brighter by the presence of illness or trouble in their midst."

Altogether these preliminary chapters have been written by a woman of intuitive sympathy with nurses as well as patients—her deductions and advice are therefore sound.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)