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**Editorial.**

**THE PRIVATE NURSE AND THE PUBLIC.**

The training of private nurses is a subject of general interest, for it is one which closely touches the public. There is almost daily evidence that a woman may be technically skilled and yet unacceptable as a nurse in private families. It is not yet sufficiently realised that as the training and education of a pupil, if she is to develop into a good ward nurse, must be conducted along certain lines; and include powers of organisation, ability to get through work, to be "good at a rush," to appreciate the needs of all the patients under her charge, so that all shall receive due care, so the pupil who intends to devote herself to private nursing should receive special instruction in the art of nursing a single patient, for in this case, while the essential details of nursing for every sick person remain the same, yet, where a nurse's whole services are retained by an individual patient, that patient has a right to expect many small attentions which cannot be given to hospital patients, and which, never having been accustomed to, they do not even miss.

But probably one chief cause of the failure of many private nurses is that they do not sufficiently appreciate a fact to which our attention was recently drawn by an experienced nurse. "In hospital," she said, "you do not regard, or nurse, your patients from the nerve standpoint. In private nursing, if you are to be successful, you must keep it continually before you." There is no doubt that, in these days of high pressure, and of an increasing tendency to "deviation from the normal," the "nerve" element must never be lost sight of.

It is probable that many of the people whom we regard as difficult, exacting, unreasonable, bad-tempered, would be charged with none of these qualities if we gauged their mental condition more accurately. Our irritation would give place to tenderness and

sympathy as we realised that the personal characteristics which we regard as "tiresome" did not rightfully belong to them at all, and were merely evidence of a nervous or mental condition, demanding medical treatment. If we estimate our world from this standpoint—and we are firmly convinced that it is the right one from which to regard it—nothing will be more calculated to develop in us that "charity which suffereth long and is kind." We cannot be irritated by traits which we know are caused by a deviation from a normal condition, for is not the whole object of our lives to help to restore the sick to sound health? Therefore it is well, when we find tiresome qualities present, to be slow to regard them as faults, but to consider them from the health point of view, and to try if we cannot by skilled nursing help the individual concerned to a more normal condition. If this point of view were more inculcated amongst private nurses, by those who are responsible for their training, the private nurse would, we are convinced, be a more popular person than she is at the present time. While it is popularly supposed that the artisan classes who form the bulk of our hospital patients rarely suffer from "nerve" complaints, yet even amongst them it will probably be found that a nervous condition is present more often than is suspected, and, indeed, that many of the breakdowns of women are caused by overstrain of the nervous system. It would not be out of place in hospital wards, therefore, to pay more attention to this point in the interests of the patients, and the gain, from a training standpoint, would be incalculable.

To give but one illustration of our meaning. In the case of a major operation do we always consider the sense of apprehension, and the mental strain endured by a patient in the days preceding it? Are we not inclined to think we have discharged our whole duty if we have carefully and conscientiously attended to his bodily preparation? We should be better nurses if we took into consideration the influence of the mind on the physical condition of a sick person.

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