

THE
BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 857.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1904.

Vol. XXXIII.

Editorial.

PRIVATE NURSING RESPONSIBILITIES.

Perhaps only those who are themselves nurses appreciate to a full extent the comfort which ensues when relatives near and dear to them are attended by well-trained and competent nurses, or the anxiety consequent when those in whom they have not full confidence are in attendance. Much has been said of late of the necessity for tactfulness, a pleasing personality and other obviously necessary virtues in the case of the private nurse. But, were these all the qualifications necessary, why employ a trained nurse at all? Surely many members of the public possess these excellencies. Those of us, however, who are aware of the responsibilities involved in private nursing know that in no branch of our profession is a higher degree of knowledge requisite. There is no Ward Sister on the spot to whom the nurse can refer in difficult moments, no house surgeon at hand who can be summoned in a few minutes. A private nurse is often in charge of an acute case with the doctor miles away, and in moments of emergency, while awaiting his arrival, has often to act upon her own judgment in matters involving great responsibility. Tact and pleasantness will avail her nothing on such occasions if her knowledge is deficient.

Again, in chronic cases the care of an experienced nurse is of the utmost value. The patient is below par and peculiarly susceptible to changes in the weather, his temperature has perhaps been normal for weeks, and an inexperienced person may fear no untoward symptoms; but the experienced nurse knows that if vigilance is relaxed danger signals, which if noted may ward off a serious illness, can easily pass unrecognised, and is, consequently, on the alert. In her estimation, a little unwonted excitability, a slight dryness of the skin, are symptoms which cause her to take a temperature at an unwonted hour, with the probable result that the rise in the thermometer clearly indicates it is necessary for the

patient to return to bed and for the medical attendant to be informed of his condition. It is extremely likely that a serious attack of illness is averted by the nurse's carefulness, and, while the value of her services may not be so conspicuous as in the case of a patient hovering between life and death, she may have the satisfaction of knowing that preventive nursing is one of its highest forms, and that to those whose knowledge enables them accurately to estimate her work its worth is great. We do well, therefore, to procure the best nursing care available for our relatives in time of sickness, and we may rest assured that the value of such services is not requited by cash paid down, for a great deal enters into the bond which golden guineas will never repay.

And is it not a fact that the better trained a nurse the more personal suitability and tact she as a rule possesses? Who that is careful in the selection of a private nursing staff will fail to make special inquiries on these points from the authorities who have had her under observation for a prolonged period? It is illogical to assume that because a woman is ignorant she is tactful, and therefore acceptable to the public, and that because she is well trained she is uncouth and disagreeable. Who is the more likely to possess the necessary personal qualities—in which we must include conscientiousness—the woman who after a few months' training in a maternity hospital assumes the responsibility of nursing general cases, and hides her profound ignorance by a pleasant manner, or the woman who during years of severe training has studied the various aspects of illness, and who knows, for instance, that irritability and unreasonableness in the sick are but phases of disease, and so estimates them and makes allowance for them? We may rest assured that the nurses to whom we can with confidence entrust the sick are those who have given evidence during an adequate period of training that they are worthy of the trust imposed upon them.

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