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### Editorial.

#### HOSPITAL VISITORS.

What nurse is there who looks forward to visiting afternoons in the hospital wards? If she exists, we do not know her. The two or three hours in the week when the visitors troop in and take possession of their respective relations are a real trial to most nurses. The orderly ward, in which a nurse takes such pride, loses its trim appearance for the time being, the quilts get awry, the lockers crooked, visitors in excess of the two usually allowed at a time to each patient are apt to slip in, in spite of a preliminary inspection at the gates contraband articles of food will find their way into the ward, all kinds of questions in regard to the patients must be answered, and, generally speaking, the visiting hour is an unpleasant one to the nurse, who gives a sigh of relief when at length it is passed, and she can "straighten the ward" and "get the teas round."

But, after all, there are other points of view to be considered. "My ward"—as a nurse is somewhat apt to regard it—is not her exclusive possession. Its primary object is the benefit of the patients, and although the sight of the visitors is not a joy to the nurse, it undoubtedly brings gladness to many a patient. What nurse does not know the restlessness which pervades a men's ward at the East End on Saturday night? Saturday night, that happy time when, with the week's wages in his pocket, the head of the household, and "my old Dutch," accompanied by their entire offspring, together do their weekly shopping. Shopping down the Old Kent Road or kindred localities is a weekly delight which it is hard to forego, and it takes all the tact of a sympathetic nurse to keep up the spirits of the ward when Saturday night comes round. Then indeed she finds it in her heart to bless the visitors, for she can remind the dejected husband that tomorrow afternoon he will see his wife, and that she will tell him all about the children,

how Johnnie is getting on in his new place, whether Tommy has got his new boots, and other matters of mutual interest and importance. After all, three hours a week is not a great while in which to discuss such topics. The patients' friends have really and truly, if we will but admit it, a strong claim upon them, for they are their own flesh and blood, or the faithful companions of a lifetime, while for us these same patients, genuinely as we like them, and faithfully as we may strive to do our duty by them, are here to-day and gone to-morrow, and their places are filled by others who absorb our interest.

Is not the antagonism which instinctively arises at the thought of the visitors due in a greater measure than we are usually inclined to admit to the spirit of officialism, which so readily creeps into any institution, and which it is our bounden duty to keep at bay if we wish our sympathies to remain fresh and human?

Let us, then, be sure that we realise our obligations to our patients' friends, that we give them a cheerful welcome to the ward, and make a point of affording them any information in our power in regard to the condition of their relatives.

Then in regard to those other visitors who come, often when the work is heavy and we feel we can ill afford time to be polite to them, they too have their claims. For are not hospitals institutions supported by the contributions of the public? Surely it is only reasonable that—within due limits—they should have access to the wards and see for themselves the working of the charity which their money supports. Nevertheless, not a few nurses are apt to meet the casual visitor with a frosty, superior, will-you-explain-your-business kind of air, before they allow him to advance beyond the door-mat. Yet the law of courtesy to all is incumbent upon us. If we fail in this we not only fail in a manifest duty, but may alienate friends and supporters from the institution which we serve.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)