

but this complaint has been made to me of nurses. A nurse must be constantly on her guard, not to give any of the household the slightest chance of feeling jealous of her. They sometimes misunderstand an invalid and think because he or she turns to the nurse for the help she only knows how to administer, that the nurse is preferred to them. We all know it is not so, but this is where real tact is required, and I think, instead of a nurse wishing to keep the near relations out of the sickroom, she should encourage them to help with the nursing in every possible way so long as it does not interfere with the welfare of the patient. If you only ask them to fan the invalid, or air a sheet, they feel they are doing something. After all, nursing is woman's work, and before the advent of the trained nurse, a sick person was entirely dependent on the women of his household for nursing; it was considered one of their duties. In the present day this fact is often lost sight of, and directly a nurse arrives the responsibilities of the sickroom are thrust upon her, much to the relief of the relations; then they feel they can amuse themselves in some way more congenial, or they send the sick member to a Nursing Home, so that they can be entirely relieved of the depressing effect, and trouble in the house that illness occasions. So when you do meet with people who still think it is their privilege to look after those nearest to them in sickness as well as health, do not be the one to hinder them in doing what is obviously their duty.

Now a "thought" on Nursing Homes is not out of place. At the present time most of the surgical work is done in them. It is more convenient to the surgeon than attending his patients in their own homes. As these establishments are frequently understaffed, outside nurses are often employed to nurse the major operations. Some surgeons always insist on their patients having special nurses. It is often more difficult to nurse in a Home than in a private house. In some the Matron takes the responsibility, in others the nurse is expected to do so, and you rarely see the Matron. You have to conform to certain rules, which sometimes do not conduce to the comfort of either the patient or nurse. Many of the houses used for Homes are not suitably built for nursing purposes. Patients have frequently complained to me of noise, or the smell of cooking, and other things that one is better able to regulate in a well-organised private house. Many nurses think they have a right to visit all or any patient in a Home. This is quite wrong, and a great annoyance to some patients, but they do not like to complain. If you have a special patient, never go into another room, but, if necessity compels you to do so, apologise for the intrusion, in the same way you would do if you entered any other private apartment, but never go in to talk to a nurse. I have heard many complaints of the annoyance caused by

nurses gossiping in this way. Their conversation, however interesting to themselves, is most worrying to the patient. Also avoid talking and whispering on the staircase and landings. I once took a patient away from a Home, and she appeared to know every detail of the operations and subsequent history of all the other patients. Her condition was morbid in the extreme; she could neither think nor talk of anything but disease. How did she know all this except from the nurses?

Another time I asked a very friendly disposed little nurse not to mention illness of any sort before my patient. She said, "Oh, I am sorry, but I am so keen on my work I can think of nothing else." I think if she had been as thoughtful as she was keen she would have done less harm. To some people the subject of disease is all-absorbing, but to others it is agony to have it thrust upon them, and it is certainly very bad for a nurse never to give herself some change of thought. I have known two cases where young girls have derived great harm to their nervous systems through the thoughtless conversation of nurses in Homes, while others have told me they have had to tell their nurses that they are not interested in hospital tales. It is most necessary for nurses to be on their guard what they say to their patients. We all know disease, and particularly operations, are freely discussed nowadays by everybody. One never seems able to get away from it, so I think it is the duty of nurses to avoid it strictly; they can never know how a simple remark of theirs will be exaggerated and misapplied.

In conclusion, I should like to add a "stray thought" for girls who when they leave school are deciding upon what work they intend to take up. If they think nursing is their vocation, then let them realise that of all work women undertake, there is no other that requires so much *character*. Therefore, let them devote themselves to acquiring all the qualities that help to make a valuable one. Give me the woman who possesses moral thoughtfulness, and with that give her a thorough hospital training, and she will make a nurse who is able to meet all the difficulties in private work. Her time after leaving school can be well occupied by learning every branch of household work so that, when necessary, she can be independent of domestic help. She can also develop her powers of observation, and if she lives in a large town she can do *herself* a great deal of good by working in a "settlement"; it will help her to sympathise with the sorrows of others and teach her how to give real help, not *charity*. She will see what true courage can do and endure. Study first those things that make you *reasonable*, that will help to make you a perfect woman and *then* a nurse. One who is—

"Quick to perceive a want,
Quicker to set it right,
Quickest in overlooking
Injury, wrong, or slight."

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