

forty, happened to be ill. She had a great horror of professional nurses, and as no skilled attendance was required, her three young daughters waited on her. They were little more than children, and after about a fortnight the doctor prevailed on her to have a nurse at night, on condition that the woman did not enter the room until after she was "settled." The nurse arrived, and the daughters retired. The woman walked up to the bedside, remarked cheerfully, "You *do* look nice and comfy, dear; I *hope* you'll sleep well," warmly kissed the astounded invalid, and withdrew to an easy chair by the fire, where she dozed peacefully, while her victim composed biting speeches to be delivered to the doctor the next morning.

Another right of the patient, often denied her, is to receive truthful replies to her questions. Leaving abstract morality on one side, there are many reasons for telling patients the truth, and no valid one for deceiving them. The usual excuse made is, "They are not strong enough to bear bad news; the shock would kill them." This is to a great extent a mistake; if invalids are very weak, their power to be deeply grieved is also very weak. Not long ago an elderly gentleman was seriously ill, and his wife was being nursed in another room and believed to be in danger of her life. The news was received of the sudden death of his brother, a man only a year younger than himself. They had been educated at the same school, and as men had worked side by side in the same office for forty years. The ties, not only of affection, but of association were therefore unusually strong. A friend of mine, not a nurse, was in temporary charge of the house. She had been brought up in the idea that all bad news must be kept from sick people; but she was unpractised in deception, and correspondence between the two brothers had been so frequent that it would have been impossible for anyone to conceal the occurrence from the survivor for more than a few days. In desperation she told him at once. To her astonishment, almost her horror, the news was received with slight and passing grief; in half-an-hour the old man was much more interested in the fact that he felt slightly stronger than he had done the day before, and thought he could get as far as his wife's room for a little chat. My friend, still clinging to her traditions, implored him not to mention his brother's death, as there would be no great difficulty in suppressing the news for several weeks, or even longer. He agreed; but very shortly he inadvertently blurted out the truth—without causing the least injury to the person whose life was considered to be hanging on a thread.

Small worries and annoyances should be sedulously kept away from patients, and with a little forethought and reticence this can be done without anything that can fairly be called deception; but

really bad news can often be borne more easily by a person dangerously ill than by a convalescent; in some cases because their feelings are deadened, in some because they are entirely self-absorbed, in others because they are in a more spiritual and exalted mood, and can see things broadly and in truer proportions.

A patient once deceived is always suspicious and uneasy, and I have often wondered what can be the moral result of these deceptions when practised for the supposed benefit of children and uneducated persons. I was told a story of a soldier invalided from India, and convinced that if he once passed a certain point on the homeward journey he should live.

Several days before reaching this place he appeared to be worse, and the doctor and chaplain agreed to tell him first that it had "hove in sight," then that it had been passed, and ordered the sick-baymen to maintain the fiction. They did so; the man recovered, and they considered their conduct fully justified. But how did they know that their circumstantial and prearranged falsehood had saved the man's life? How did they know that the truth would have killed him, and that it would not have been sufficient to repeat as often as he asked the question, "We are nearer every minute; keep up your courage, man! You can hold out if you try"? What can the moral effect have been on the man and all his ignorant comrades?

The belief that it is right to deceive invalids often imposes a cruel strain on the relatives. I remember one pitiable case that occurred in an English colony. A wife had given birth to her seventh child, and, although nothing had gone wrong, was not making as rapid a recovery as usual. An epidemic broke out, and attacked all the children except the infant. The father nursed them and buried them one by one. Every day, after disinfection, he went to his wife's room and assured her that all was well, but that he had sent them away with their nurse, so that she should have perfect quiet. When the last child was buried further concealment became impossible. The wife, still in a very weak state, learnt the tragedy without any visible effect on her health. The husband never recovered from the strain caused by his superhuman self-control, and died of no definite disease before the year was out.

Another right of invalids, constantly infringed, is that their dignity should be kept up in the eyes of servants, children, and younger relatives. I have often known inferiors in age and position allowed to criticise an invalid in a manner that would in other circumstances be sharply checked, and almost encouraged to speak of her with scarcely veiled contempt. Why should these things be? Is the mere fact of illness a disgrace and a degradation?

Again, in the eyes of many people an invalid seems to have forfeited all right to have any private

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