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Editorial.

RESTFULNESS.

A nurse must be a many-sided person. Active, alert, quick in emergency, confident—not with the confidence of the ignorant but with that begotten of knowledge—besides which she is expected to be personally an embodiment of all the qualities pertaining to an ideal woman, and, as patients' ideals vary, her rôle is not an easy one. One and all, however, combine in expecting a high standard of conduct from nurses, a standard which they exact of no other body of workers, except, perhaps, the clergy. It may be cause for pride that the profession we love is placed on so high a pinnacle, it is cause for sober reflection that just so much as we fall short of the estimate the public has chosen to form of the ideal nurse, by just so much shall we lower its opinion of our profession as a whole. It is the fact that each individual nurse holds the honour of her profession in her hands which should be an incentive to prove its high standing, by the illustration she affords in each house she enters of all that a trained nurse can be. When we remember that Miss Nightingale has laid down that "a good nurse should be the Sermon on the Mount in herself," we may well wonder if it is possible in a lifetime to attain the ideal thus set before us.

But there is one quality which the nurse who strives after this ideal, even if she has not completely realised it, develops almost unconsciously, a quality which stands both herself and her patients in good stead, and that is the quality of restfulness.

The present age is a restless one, an age of little peace even to those who, knowing the value, mental and physical, of quiet moments, seek to fence round a few hours

in which to gather themselves up again for the everyday hustle. Still less rest does it contain for those who shun solitude, and hasten from one distraction to another in order to avoid it. When, as not unfrequently happens, the overtaxed nervous system rebels, and a breakdown, necessitating medical treatment and nursing care, ensues, the nurse selected is most likely to be successful if she can bring into the sick-room an atmosphere of tranquillity. We all know such nurses. As they enter a ward or a sick-room they bring with them a sense of calm, of strength, of well-being. We feel confident that things will go right in their capable hands, we cease from being fretted and worried by trifles, and so begin unconsciously to renew our mental health.

The quality of restfulness is one with which nature has endowed some persons more bountifully than others, but it is one which may and should be cultivated by those whose duty brings them into contact with the sick.

"The world's a room of sickness, where each heart
Knows its own anguish and unrest ;
The highest wisdom there and truest art
Is his who skills of comfort best."

For the possession of such skill by a nurse the self discipline and self control of a well ordered life are essential, combined with real, not assumed, undemonstrative sympathy, and, of course, with a thorough knowledge of her professional work. Again, she should be sensitive to the patient's condition of mind. He will often cheerfully co-operate with her if the moment to make a proposition is judiciously chosen, when at another he will only be fretted and jarred. Tact is needed to choose the right moment. The nurse who possesses these gifts is not likely to be long out of employment, for they are qualities which are greatly in demand.

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