

Private Nurse's Problems.

Ella Jay had been Sister of the Men's Surgical for ten years, and for the first five had run the one and only Theatre as well, with operations every day, and sometimes a big one in the middle of the night. When we had a new Theatre and a Theatre Sister poor Ella cried on the quiet—she wanted the Theatre but would not give up her ward. In the end she stayed in the ward, and devoted all her energies to making it the best of its kind. She was certainly a splendid Sister, the best the Hospita had ever had. The more work she had to do the better she liked it.

One day the rumour went round that Sister Jay had resigned, but no one believed it. The next day it was said that she had asked to be put on the private staff, and that report was regarded as the joke of the year. I had been on the private staff for years, and, being in from a case at the time, I laughed with the rest at the idea of Sister Jay taking up private work. In the evening I went to her room to chaff her about it, and was astonished to find the report true. I knew Ella too well to try to persuade her to change her mind, so thought I would give her a little insight into private work instead.

"To begin with, Ella," I said, "you will have to go slowly. You cannot hustle your patients, and you cannot make them do anything they don't want to do."

"No?" said Ella. "Well, I am getting old; I am thirty-six, and shall be glad of a breathing space."

"You will have to do 'pro's' work, too."

"I don't mind that. My fingers often itch to do their work as it is."

Somehow, I felt very sorry for Ella, so began to tell her of the brighter side.

"You won't know a penny 'bus when you see one. You will either drive in a carriage and pair or a thousand-pound motor-car."

"Ah! I love motors. But—there will be the patient. There will be no time for driving."

"Oh, yes, there will. I drove every day at my last case. They said it was good for me, and who am I, that I should contradict? Then, you will have a lovely bedroom, nice soft carpets, real easy chairs, a gentle-footed, soft-spoken maid to call you in the morning, and to bring you an early cup of tea in Dresden or Crown Derby china."

"I do love pretty china."

"And you will dine in a big room with two or three dukes to wait on you. They are men-servants really, but you would not know that if you were not told. And when you go out 'fine walking' one of them will hand you

your broly neatly furled, and another will open the door and see you safely off the doorstep. You will have all the choicest fruits of the earth to eat—in short you will live like a millionaire without being troubled by the income-tax man. You will have plenty of servants to wait on you, and you won't have to worry about paying them. The cook will make you feel that you have never really dined before, and it won't matter to you if she "cooks" her books as well as the dinners. You will enjoy lovely gardens, and never know what they cost to keep up."

"Go on," said Ella, "I am not asleep. I am only shutting my eyes so as to enjoy the picture more."

I resumed my cheerful recital of a nurse's joys. "If you want anything for your patient no one will say you are extravagant, they will only say you are so kind, you think of everything. If they have a big specialist they will ask you if you think he knows his work."

"Oh, horrors!"

"Don't be alarmed. In many houses you will find that you are supposed to know more than any doctor, and when a new medicine is ordered you will have to give your opinion of it before the patient will touch it."

"What fools!"

"Well, dear, it is time I went. Let me know how you get on, and, if possible, I'll try to look you up."

"Seems to me you private nurses ought to pay for your privileges instead of being paid."

"Yes?—of course there are other sorts; you have to take the rough with the smooth."

We happened to be sent to cases near to each other, and two weeks later I met Sister Jay. Poor Sister! She reminded me so much of a kitten I had when I was young. It was nearly drowned once, and though I rubbed it well with a bath towel, and brushed and combed it, it did not look right for several days. Ella looked brushed and combed, very clean and neat, but not like herself for all that. She brightened up when she saw me coming along the road.

"Well, my dear, and what do you suppose you are doing?" I asked.

"Unless there is something radically wrong with your eyes I should think you can see that I am pushing this infernal machine with these kiddies in it."

From this outburst I concluded that things were not going smoothly.

"They look nice quiet sort of children," said I, "what's wrong with them?"

"Wrong with them? Everything!"

"Are they your patients?"

"No, but their mother is. Remember the

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)