

## The Relations of Nursing and Medicine.\*

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The relation between the medical and nursing professions, is just one of those subjects that looks as if it might be easily dismissed in a few sentences, but is not so readily dealt with when one begins to consider it.

No one doubts the existence of a medical profession. Well organised, well equipped, holding a distinct mandate from the public to act on its behalf in all matters connected with disease and health, it enjoys in a really extraordinary manner the thoroughly well deserved confidence and trust of the public.

And the position of the medical profession is based on a sound foundation. It is possible to be peaceful and indifferent enough to pass through life without troubling either a lawyer or clergyman, but very, very few of us escape the doctor. He ushers us into the world, he assists us to leave it, and in the interval he vaccinates us, sees us through measles, scarlet fever, mumps, and the more alarming disorders of our later life. We look to him to deliver us from the results of our follies and misfortunes; it is to him we turn for relief from pain, for help in the thousand ills that the flesh is heir to. No calling is more well established and justly popular with all classes. None more indispensable. What position, then, towards the great masters of the healing art does the nurse hold? What nursing as a whole to medicine?

Arguing from one point of view, it is quite possible to doubt the need of a nursing profession at all. Arguing from another, and from one, I believe, justified by results, it holds an exceedingly important position in the treatment of disease. Nursing in its simplest form is older than medicine. Even in the Stone Ages there must have been some women to bathe the wounds of the brave who had been mauled by one of the awkward animals of those days, to lay him on the softest skins, to bring him drink, and to try in a rough way to make him comfortable. As absolute savagery passes a desire arises in men.

They wish to wrestle with disease as they were used to wrestle with more tangible foes, to match their cunning against that of death, to try a fall with the strongest of all powers, to know the why and wherefore of this terrible

misfortune that overtakes the race, to try whether it might be evaded. It is little more than superstition and ritual, but it is the first dim effort at investigation and treatment, the first rudimentary attempt to assist nature in a cure. The medicine man has arrived. In the meantime nursing goes on its way with the same old fundamental principle, "to make him comfortable."

But medicine is nothing if not progressive, and as civilisation advances science is pressed into its service, chemistry lends its aid, bacteriology opens new worlds, the art of surgery extends its borders, and finally the profession of medicine decrees that nursing shall no longer be carried on in haphazard fashion, but that it also shall be subordinate to scientific principles. The nurse of the sick shall really be competent to assist with knowledge and to carry out with skill her share of the work. She shall count as a factor in the treatment of disease. She shall assist the medicine man. Thus we arrive at modern nursing.

When this commonsense view became generally accepted, the profession of nursing grew with extraordinary rapidity. From the moment it dawned upon the public that it was possible to have a tool trained to work under the doctor with intelligent comprehension, to have someone to lean on in his absence, someone who could with knowledge translate and carry out his orders, modern nursing has never looked back. Nurses have been, of course, abused, they have often been regarded as a disastrous necessity, but they have been regarded as a necessity.

"Doctors and nurses were at once despatched"; so concludes the account of many an accident. "Sir Dash Dash and four trained nurses are in constant attendance," runs the report in cases of illness in which the public are interested. During an epidemic the country is ransacked for nurses to supply the infected area. Wherever dwells humanity liable to be afflicted with disease or injury there must go the medical man. It may be to the heart of Africa, on coasts riddled with malaria, to plague camps, on battlefields; but wherever it may be, there, sooner or later, generally much sooner, he is followed by the nurse. Just an ordinary commonplace woman, by no means always perfect, and often (being human) making grievous mistakes, but necessary, always necessary, and giving, in a very curious way (if at all worthy of her name) a comfort and sense of relief nothing else gives. We are fast reaching out towards it—we have not yet quite arrived—but when the medical and the nursing profession have fully realised what each must be and is to the other, a

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