

weapon will have been forged to deal with disease, as finely welded as a human weapon can be.

The actual work the nurse does as the physician's or surgeon's assistant varies, must vary, with surroundings and circumstances. We are too often in such matters the slaves of custom. Such things are customary in one hospital or country, such in another. Many things are done by nurses to-day that were not left to them thirty years ago. It is a matter of small moment as to what exactly are the duties demanded of her as long as she is able to fulfil them, and as long as the principle is not lost sight of that regulates the relative position of the two professions towards the patient. It is the duty of the doctor to direct, diagnose, and control; it is the duty of the nurse to obey and carry out the treatment prescribed by the senior partner. We have to thank that senior partner for a great and illuminating interest in our work, for making clear to us what before was dark and uncertain, for helping us to build a road along which we travel in safety, where before we wandered on dubious side-paths.

Before the medicine men gave us their help and assistance and taught us to appreciate the beauty that lies in the scientific and artistic side of the healing art, nursing failed to satisfy the craving of a whole gamut of legitimate aspirations in our nature.

Nursing was then undertaken either by those very perfect souls whose life was sufficiently filled by self-sacrifice, and who desired nothing better than to spend themselves for others; or, as unfortunately there really were not enough idealists for the needs of the sick, by those who considered nursing as unadulterated toil. Neither uplifted by a high ideal, nor refined by the more intellectual side of their work, these often drifted to a deplorably low level.

As the doctor's assistant, we learn to take that sane view of illness which prevents us from becoming morbid, and to find in our work mental stimulus and satisfaction. But nursing, in spite of all it owes to its more learned, more powerful partner, still holds an undeniable position of its own, a position it owes to something inborn, inherited, that lies deeper than learning.

I had occasion to write a short time ago that no good nurse would ever desire to be an inferior medical practitioner, and I repeat that statement, because I now come to the point where the medical and nursing professions do not differ—that they never can, never should do—but where the nursing profession asserts its right to a separate existence.

Scientific nursing is impossible without

medicine and surgery; it is their handmaiden, their pupil; but the nurse must never lose sight of the fact no good doctor would wish her to forget—that she is not only the surgeon's or physician's assistant, but, first and foremost, the patient's nurse.

Where the training of the nurse is so organised that she comes to regard the doctor as of more importance than the patient, the case as an adjunct to the treatment rather than as its cause, she is being educated in a mistaken moral atmosphere. Where the attention and deference paid to the medical staff is inculcated with more energy than kindness and consideration to her patients, she is learning false ethics. There will always be the danger lest the admiration with which the nurse naturally regards the cleverness, skill, dexterity, and knowledge of the medical man, and the interest she takes in the scientific side of the healing art, should lead her to look with something a little like contempt on her own humbler and simpler duties, on which so much, so very much, of the patient's comfort depends.

I am always glad that in England we use the old word, nursing, for the care of the sick; it expresses exactly my meaning to-day, for it is the same word that is used to describe a mother and her child—the mother nursing her infant. It is the idea of the woman nursing the child of larger growth—the man or woman helpless from sickness; the primeval idea; we reach back to our ancestress of the Stone Age, we are filled with the simple desire to "make him comfortable."

When that feeling is lost, much of the charm of nursing is lost, too, for it makes for something that people desire in sickness. For then it is not the interesting case, the scientific points, even the new methods of treatment, that hold us, but the patient, the battered or diseased scrap of humanity before us, and it is just because in nursing we may not lose or drop the old primeval instinct, that we must retain our own individuality in face of the great profession to which we are so closely allied.

Just that and nothing more. Nursing is subordinate to medicine in so far as it loyally carries out the treatment prescribed, but it is a voluntary subordination for the good of the patient.

And we subordinate ourselves gladly, for, with the doctors, we feel the truth of those lines:—

Vor den Wissenden sich stellen  
Sicher ist in allen Fällen  
Denn die wissen wo's Dir fehlt.

They criticise us with knowledge because

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