

## Do Nurses Talk Shop—A Protest.

Every month or so one of the lay papers lamentingly alleges that nurses habitually talk "shop." If that is not adding insult to injury, I don't know what is. Does there live a nurse who has not been bored to tears through patients or their friends talking of diseases? Most people have an idea that it is immoral for a nurse to think, much less talk, of anything under the sun but the illnesses of their patients. Every little ache or pain they have ever felt since the day they were weaned is, or should be, of absorbing interest to the nurse; all their waking hours are devoted to giving her a full, true, and particular account of these aches and pains, and when they have finished they begin at the beginning and go through them all again. If the supply of personal harrowing details runs out, they tell her of everything that has ever happened to their friends, or even to their cats, dogs, or horses.

Last summer I was nursing the son of an old colonel, who had an idea that I ought to enjoy myself, and insisted upon my joining his guests at a garden party. At first I refused, because I had only uniform, but he said that did not matter in the least, for the uniform was so pretty; so in the end I had to give in. In the garden he introduced me to a very pretty widow, who entertained me with a full, detailed account of her late husband's last illness.

He had Bright's disease! Fancy discussing Bright's disease in a lovely garden, blazing with flowers! I tried to get away from her, tried to make her interested in the flowers, the tennis players, the pretty dresses, and the blue mountains shimmering in the distant haze, but all to no purpose. She would talk of nothing but what the nurse said, what the doctor said, what her husband said and felt, and her own feelings. When she could think of no more distressing details, she wanted to know if I thought anything more could have been done for him, and was surprised to find that I did not know the nurses she had, even by name, although they came from London.

At this juncture the dear old Colonel came to tell us that tea was ready, and I managed to steal away while he was finding her a comfortable seat. The Colonel sent a youth of some twenty tennis seasons to see that I had all I wanted. He, having brought up a strong detachment of strawberries, cream, and cakes, proceeded to put out of sight a very good tea. I nobly followed his example. "Now," thought I, "we can't talk diseases." But, alas, I was mistaken!

"Ripping place, this," said the youth.

"Beautiful," said I. "I don't wonder that people used to worship the mountains. Are they not grand, from here?"

"Yes, they are. Do you climb?"

"No, I don't care for paths smaller than a pony track."

"Oh, I don't call that climbing. Last week I was up on that point which you can just see to the left of the big cedar tree. It is a great height, and very stiff climbing. There was a chap killed up there, and I wanted to see the place where he came to grief. They had removed his body, but there was all the blood fresh upon the rocks." And he helped himself to more strawberries.

I felt sick, and the grand mountains began to look terrible, but I was determined to think of life and sunshine, so asked if he had seen the Colonel's new motor.

"Yes, rather," said he; "it's a clincher. Do you like motoring?"

"Very much indeed," said I, "especially in such a hilly district as this. It would be cruel to drive here, the hills are so steep."

"I quite agree with you. Have you ever been in a spill?"

"No, thanks be, and hope I never shall be."

"I was in a bad one once, going down the Sunrising, on Edgehill. Do you know it?"

"Yes, and cannot understand why anyone should motor down it. The other hill is more beautiful, and not so dangerous."

"Oh, well, you know it's more exciting on the Sunrising. There were three of us; one was killed on the spot, and he was such a nice fellow, and we two—that is, my brother and I—spent the next few weeks in a nursing home getting patched up. I'm all right now, but my brother had to have his right leg off."

Then followed a vivid description of their injuries, how they looked and felt, and a very lengthy account of the nursing home. Just imagine it—a nursing home at a garden party! Instead of the roses I could smell carbolic, and in place of the mignonette, iodoform. I hastily pulled out my watch, and said I must go in. And I went in, and played patience (which I loathe).

Why does not someone found a Society for the Abolition of Diseased Conversations? We have an anti-corset crusade, and movements for the suppression of tobacco, swearing, and other things far less obnoxious. I used to think that people talked about diseases to me because I was a nurse, but this is evidently not so. Last autumn I was staying with a patient at an hotel where no one knew that I was a nurse, and yet the conversation centred on bodily complaints. One afternoon there

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