

guinea fur cape. The sick-room was on the top floor of a high London house, and the meals cooled during their ascent in the lift. I asked that a hot-water plate might be purchased for her use, as the illness was likely to last six weeks. Could I not possibly manage without? was the reply. They were only a young couple, and not at all rich. A request for an eighteenpenny tea-infuser was met with the same protest. However, the devotion being obvious, I succeeded in manifesting to the family the absolute need of these things for the patient's comfort, and therefore for her good recovery, and I pointed out several directions in which the outlay might be counter-balanced.

The all-important point of fires demands much knowledge and skill in the matter of fuel and stoking where coal bills have to be considered.

At another case, where necessary expenses were continuously deplored, I was asked one morning by her sister if the patient might have quails or snipe for her dinner. Did she specially desire quails or snipe? I inquired of the patient. No. She likes them as well as many another dish, not more. So I suggested, Why go to the expense of such birds when the patient was really well enough to eat a beef-steak pudding? "Would you like a beef-steak pudding?" I asked. She would, emphatically; so beefsteak pudding it was, a quite fascinating morsel, made in a lilliputian pudding basin.

Similarly, the household resources are often unduly strained to supply unnecessary alcoholic drinks, when judiciously prepared and administered drinks of various other kinds would nourish to the extent of making stimulants unmissed.

The chemist's bill after a case of illness usually reveals reckless orders on the part of both the nurse and the family. The generous state of mind which the suffering or risk of death to a dear one engenders so often manifests itself in this way, as the remaining superfluity of supplies testifies. Not all can afford to do as a friend of mine invariably does after a case of illness in her house, namely, pack all off to the local cottage hospital.

There are many ways in which resourcefulness on the part of the nurse may obviate a purchase that at first sight appears imperative though unattainable. Bed-tables, bed-rests, cradles, supports, screens, bed-warmers, bronchitis kettles, foot-baths, may all be improvised from articles already in the house or at the cost of a few pence.

Seeing that illness, sooner or later, invades most homes, I have often wondered why, in the country villages, the score or so of families who constitute "the gentry," and who are usually on terms of intimate friendship, do not arrange to purchase all the appliances, comforts, and luxuries incidental to the proper nursing of a week's illness between them, each retaining the appliance for which she has paid, everything being lent to the household which is for the time overtaken by illness.

Only the trained nurse can realise how frequently her efforts fall short of their best results because of the lack of numerous desirable appliances, which would soften the strain to her patient, now here, now there. To have the best pattern of bed-pan, and also the best pattern of douche-pan, instead of having to make a cheap and inferior bed-pan serve both purposes, implies ultimate health and strength, and therefore saving of expense, to the patient, though not all are sufficiently far-sighted to see this. Yet, failing suggestions and help from the nurse, the nursing in the vast majority of private houses must on the ground of expense fall far short of the best. One sees so many illustrations of the penny wise and pound foolish system during illness. The idea should be to economise in every respect that does not touch the patient, even indirectly, in order to increase spending facilities on those points that do affect him.

I remember a maternity case in which the need for economy was enjoined on the nurse who had been engaged at the eleventh hour. She found complete lack of many necessaries, and was begged to manage without them if at all possible. Yet a twenty-five guinea layette had been purchased, many of the garments being quite useless, and a relative had sent an assortment of twelve-guinea infant's cloaks from which the prospective mother could make a choice. It took some time to convince her that such a cloak was not only unnecessary but inadvisable, with its heavy weight of silk fringe, and that a third of its cost would secure the needed Shetland shawls and a light-weight cloak.

Not all nurses are competent to advise in this way; but all nurses should be. A very great proportion of this world's mental and physical suffering is directly due to wrong spending of money, time, and energy in every department of life, and many never realise this until it is clearly pointed out to them by another.

There is much cheese-paring and false economy to be met with; much meanness. But true economy is none of these. It is a far-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)