

Nurses have their dinner hour from one to two, the next instalment of Doctors soon appear, but between dinner and the advent of the Medicus there is a universal calm throughout the Wards, patients fall into a peaceful slumber, the Nurses for a short time have perfect rest, and I believe throughout the building the proverbial forty winks is being fully appreciated. The authorities seldom disturb this short repose, from the fact of their being similarly engaged or blind to the fact. This tiny respite forms quite an oasis in the desert, and Nurses proceed with their afternoon duties, which are frequently most arduous, until their tea-time, which is from five to 5.45. Two hours daily is allowed off duty, and from two to nine once a week, every Sunday alternate morning and evening, and every fourth Sunday from two to 9.30, always a little extra time at Christmas, Easter, Whitsuntide, &c., and a fortnight during the year. Nurses, Night Nurses, and Probationers sup together at nine to 9.45, the Wardmaids have theirs in the Duty-room and take charge of the Wards for a short period.

Probationers' duties are similar to those of the Nurses. They are learning what the Nurses fully understand; they are allowed much the same time off duty; they dine and take tea one hour earlier, so as to set the Nurses at liberty to enjoy theirs. I don't think meals should be hurried, and everyone is entitled to a proper allowance of time for them, if only for the sake of health. "After dinner sit awhile," is a well-known and oft-quoted proverb, and I should imagine emanated from the medical profession, which, besides being advantageous to the digestive powers, possesses a charm in itself, especially when dinner is followed by the cup that cheers but not inebriates, and thus adds the delightful element of "cosiness."

In a Hospital where Sisters are employed, lady Probationers can be taken, who are trained solely for authority. They go through the routine of the Wards, with few exceptions, the same as the others, and when their training is complete become Sisters. The ordinary Probationers are only Nurses, and no Nurse ever rises to the position of Sister. All this may appear difficult in theory, but in practice it is simple and the system is successful.

The Wardmaids do the menial work that was formerly performed by Nurses, and the removal of such duties has had a great deal to do with the advanced ideas of Nursing now in vogue. The fireplaces, scrubbing, lavatories, washing-up, all belong to them. They were formerly called scrubbers; now as Wardmaids, and on the staff of a Hospital, their position is equally im-

proved with the Nurses' advancement, in fact, "Excelsior" should be the motto for all Hospital workers. Now, I think the Wardmaids have almost the same privileges as the others in their leave of absence; they take dinner and tea with the Probationers, they prepare the meals for the Nurses, and the dormitories are in their charge.

The Night Nurse must be fully trained: she will require two Probationers to assist her, and will herself be placed where her services will be most required. She is called at 8.30, and after supper, which is taken with the Nurses, goes on duty at 9.45. I endeavour to arrange as short hours as possible for Night Nurses, as there is no break in the tedious hours of the night for them. Tea and breakfast is taken to suit their own convenience. I have no doubt, "patients permitting," they take it *en famille*, and make themselves as happy as the somewhat depressing circumstances will permit. But the long night draws to a close. Between four and five is the most quiet; restless patients get a little doze by now, and Nurse takes advantage of the little lull, and sometimes joins them in the land of dreams for a few moments. By five o'clock, however, she must commence her finishing touches of her night's work. She has temperatures to take, medicine frequently, fomentations, and lots of things to fill up her time. The Day Nurse expects to find all in order, the report written, and her arrival is the signal for the Night Nurse's departure, that is unless something very urgent requires her assistance for another hour. Eleven hours is long, and too long, but unless an extra Probationer be kept, I do not see how to remedy it. The Night Nurses are now at liberty to rest, read, or walk until twelve o'clock—their dinner hour—and this is the last we see of them until evening.

Sometimes the Night Nurse prefers exchanging morning's leave of absence for evening's; there is no objection to this provided she spends an allotted time in bed. Before retiring, one of her duties is to see that every one is at her post, and report to the Matron. The Nurses, providing there is no Sister, will in turn read prayers before entering the Wards, and before going off duty at night, in the Nurse's Day-room; the domestic servants are also present. A form of prayer is also arranged and read in each Ward by the Nurse morning and evening.

The domestic staff are all equally under the control of the Matron. They have the same rules to keep as to time, &c., as the Nurses. Arranging their duties is something after the fashion of putting a puzzle together; it looks worse than it is, but when finished fits exactly. The servants in a Hospital are generally happy. They are under wholesome restraints; they have every

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)