

WHAT *NOT* TO DO IN A SICK-ROOM.

BY A NURSE.



THE best-intentioned people, with the very kindest hearts, are often the sources of great annoyance, not to say suffering, to those whom they are nursing in illness, simply from want of thought and ignorance of how to act in a sick-room.

It is the general idea, of course, that a woman is a born nurse; but that is a popular fallacy, as far as the actual fact is concerned. Though she may have a great deal of natural talent for her work, that talent needs developing, and care and culture can do a great deal in making her a good nurse.

As this paper proposes to deal with the subject from a negative point of view, I will here give a few hints, the results of much experience, as to what *not* to do when nursing anyone. It must be borne in mind that this is by no means supposed to be exhaustive—rather it is giving an outline which each individual can elaborate for herself.

Do not, when you are nursing, wear an inconvenient dress—*i.e.*, one with either a long train or large dress-improver—but have something simple, that does not rustle, and, if possible, of washing material. In nursing an infectious case this latter is indispensable.

Do not imagine that to take proper care of your own health by taking sufficient rest and regular food is selfishness. If you do not keep in good health you run a great chance of catching whatever your patient is suffering from, or, if it is not contagious, of breaking down from exhaustion. For nursing is a great strain to mind and body, and the nurse should do all she can to prevent herself from becoming ill. Six hours' sleep, taken, if possible, out of the sick-room, is necessary; and it must be remembered that to lie down in the sick-room partially dressed is not half as resting.

Do not take your food in the sick-room, and never keep any food for yourself or the patient in it: all spoons, glasses, and anything, in short, that is used, being washed outside the room.

Do not be afraid of fresh air. Excepting where the doctor positively orders to the contrary, an inch or two of the window should be left open at the *top* night and day. Opening the window at the bottom is not as good; and remember that if you want pure air you must get it from outside, and not from a passage, unless there is in that passage an open window.

Do not whisper in a sick-room. Of all things calculated to annoy a sick person, whispering is about the greatest. Should you require to speak to someone, go out of the room, but do not forget to close the door after you, and not stand talking with the latter ajar.

Do not walk about in a stealthy way or on tip-toe, and always have soft-soled shoes on—nothing that creaks. High-heeled shoes make a disagreeable noise, even on a carpet, to the sensitive hearing of the invalid, and should be avoided.

Do not discuss the patient before his face; and if you are asked in his hearing how he is, try and return an answer as hopeful and cheerful as you can make it. It is never well to tell an invalid bad news, or to recount the tale of anything sad or melancholy. People are apt to dwell upon what they hear, as they have not much in illness to think of; and all that is bright and cheering should be told them. Avoid saying, "You do look dreadful to-day!" or else, "You are so pale; should you not like something to restore you?" Notice the paleness or any other change in the sick person—and a nurse cannot be too observant—but she should keep her thoughts to herself, and not speak them to the patient. Always have handy an inkstand with ink in it, and a pen that will write, as well as writing and blotting paper, upon which the doctor may write his prescription.

Do not give any medicine without first looking at the label, to make perfectly sure that it is all right. If the doctor has changed the prescription, put the medicine bottle previously in use quite away, for fear of mistakes.

Do not act upon your own judgment in defiance of the doctor's orders, unless in very exceptional and extraordinary cases. These rarely occur, and it is well to remember that a nurse, however naturally skilled and perfectly trained, is but a tool in the doctor's hands. She is to be able to carry out his orders, and in general cases to obey him implicitly.

Do not be alone, if you can help it, with a delirious patient, as it is most dangerous, people in that state often acting in the most unforeseen way. Let a delirious patient talk what nonsense he pleases; always agree with him, and never attempt to argue with him. If you can, try and appear interested in his talk: it often helps to quiet him. Arguing, if a patient is delirious *or not*, is always to be avoided; and you should never oblige a patient to decide things for himself. It is not wise to ask a patient if he will have such-and-such a thing; if it is something ordered, or his regular meal, or what you see he needs, bring it to him, and then see if he will take it. Food should always be made to look nice, and only a little brought at a time. Should the patient refuse it, do not leave it by his side on the chance of his changing his mind, but take it away out of the room, and bring him something fresh later.

Do not be fussy in your ways. Try and be calm, however trying the circumstances and painful the scenes you have to witness. Your manner will insensibly affect your patient, whether for good or bad, and quietness is a very great thing to be aimed at.

A kind yet firm manner is indispensable, as all roughness and sharpness is unpardonable in a nurse. Sick people are often irritating, and it needs much patience in nursing them; but patience should be considered a *sine quâ non*, for if people cannot help feeling tired they *can* help expressing their feelings.

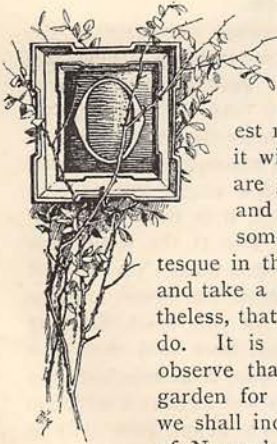
Do not have any noisy occupations in the sick-room. If you have needlework, let it be noiseless, and avoid the clicking of knitting-needles—a sound small in itself, which, however, has the power of being very annoying to a sick person. In some cases of brain disease every noise is a cause of great pain, and care should be taken to avoid it. A fire is generally a noisy part of the arrangements of a sick-room. This is not by any means necessary, as it can easily be kept up or made very noiselessly. A pair of housemaid's gloves should be kept near the fire-place, and the coal put on with the fingers. It is always best to have the coals for the sick-room selected in knobs, and these can easily be placed on the fire, and, if the afore-named gloves are used, without soiling the fingers. Or else the coal can be placed on the fire by using those small tongs which cost so little, can easily be purchased at any ironmonger's, and which are most useful. For keeping up a fire in cases of severe illness, where it is

advisable even to use greater caution to avoid noise, and also for replenishing it at night, it is a good plan to have a coal-scuttle made up the last thing at night, filled with little packets of coal made up in thin paper. These, even without gloves, can easily be laid on the fire, and as the paper burns at once, the coals go on without any noise.

Do not neglect the personal cleanliness of your patient. A warm bath should be given once a week, unless the doctor orders to the contrary; the feet should be washed twice a week or more, and the face and hands, back and shoulders, *every day*. Most scrupulous cleanliness is absolutely necessary for everyone who has the least desire to live in obedience to the laws of health, and to keep perfectly clean all parts of the body that press heavily on the bed is to avoid bed-sores.

Do not imagine that burning pastilles or scented paper dissipates an unpleasant odour or purifies the air. They merely cover the odour, and do not purify the air. Fire and fresh air do the latter; and besides these, in a sick-room, it is well to place open dishes containing Condry's fluid and water about the room, and all vessels in use should have a little kept in them. Condry's fluid is invaluable in illness; and my last advice to you is—do not be without it.

THE GARDEN IN NOVEMBER.



IN all the twelve months in the year, the month of November has the dreariest ring about it. We associate it with fogs and with days that are growing shorter and darker, and popularly speaking there is something just now almost grotesque in the invitation: "Let us come and take a turn in the garden." Nevertheless, that is just what we are going to do. It is sufficiently commonplace to observe that, if we utterly neglect the garden for any one month in the year, we shall incur the risk of having a sort of November garden all the year round.

Well, and on the supposition that it is a cheerless morning, we will go at once into the greenhouse, where perhaps the little surroundings of an artificial summer may give a filip to our spirits. From now until February is the great period of rest for our plants: they are, as it were, in bed and asleep. Now, if we were asked what is the primary object of having a greenhouse at all, we should unhesitatingly reply, it is merely a building to exclude the frost entirely, and one in which we preserve our plants during the cold season.

A very different thing this from a hotbed or a forcing-house. And yet in ordinary and domestic

gardening the mistake is not infrequently made that a greenhouse is a building which must always be kept at an August temperature. So then let us say, at this time of the year, in the greenhouse much depends upon the weather, but as far as possible avoid giving artificial heat. Even during a period of intense frost we keep up our fire, but get almost concerned if we think that the thermometer inside is standing too high. A little over 40° by day, and if at night you find your thermometer has fallen as low as 34° you need not be alarmed—this would make a good average for the winter temperature of your greenhouse. Of course when a prolonged frost is about you must bank up your fire with ashes at night, and look into your greenhouse the first thing in the morning.

If by any mishap or carelessness you notice on entering, at seven a.m., that your thermometer is, say, at 30°, you will quickly see the results in the least hardy of your plants, which will look as if they had been blasted. Now, the harder you succeed in rendering your plants, the better able will they be to resist the effects of some of those violent changes of temperature to which our English climate is subject. For this purpose, then, give air freely in mild weather. Of late years we have had one or two almost lovely Novembers, and to get well over this month is something to achieve. And even in ungenial weather some air must be admitted during the best of the day, say between one and two o'clock p.m.