

Down Memory Lane

Strengthening Others with Sympathy

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WE were thinking of the demands our wonderful vocation of nursing makes on us. Sometimes one hears the remark "she'll get used to it." Let us be careful never to get used to seeing suffering. Our vocation should always be 'what can I do to help him or her to bear their suffering.' Show your love for your patient by striving your utmost to be gentle.

I remember the joy I felt when once a patient not far from death said "But, oh nurse, you are so gentle in the way you nurse me." It made everything seem worthwhile and gave me work-satisfaction, which helps us along the way of routine. We can even grow to love the very demands our vocation makes on us—they cease to be burdens and become joys—the joy of alleviating the suffering of others or strengthening them by our sympathy. Occasionally we can do this by letting them realise there are others worse off than themselves—like the little boy who was sorry for himself because he had no shoes, until he met another little boy who had no legs!

Wanting to Do More

Let us not be content with what we do or know, let us always want to do more and learn more. Do not be like the nurse who came to me once and gave me the nursing text books as a present for some poor nurse who couldn't afford to buy any. My response was "But what will you do when you need to refer back to your books? There is always more to learn or revise". Knowledge rightly shown or used can always inspire confidence in others—doctors as well as patients and fellow nurses.

Once there was an elderly Sister student in a ward and also a 17-year old student was discovered by the Matron in floods of tears. She

was asked what was the matter and replied amidst her tears "Sister X has been transferred from this ward, who is going to teach me now and help me to understand?" You see our vocation is very wide and certainly includes care of our fellow nurses irrespective of age! This incident can teach us other things. We learn not for our sake, but for the sake of others. If there is something you don't know, ask and understand. Let us not be afraid to say 'we don't know', when asked something. If you don't know and are not told, determine to find out and keep on asking in the right places till you do know! It can all be a great adventure!

Again, we can gradually learn self-control. I remember one nurse whose mother told her she could never be a nurse because she always fainted even if she pricked her own finger sewing and a drop of blood came! Fortunately she firmly believed she could overcome this weakness. Just fancy, part of her interview for acceptance or rejection for Nursing training was to have to witness a big surgical operation. She was scared and got butterflies in her tummy when she was told to go to the theatre, and dress in sterile clothes. She did, praying hard the whole way. But when the incision was made she saw how efficiently the doctor clamped all the arteries, her fainting feelings just disappeared and she practically never experienced them again. It also made her able to help other young probationers conquer similar reactions!

Acquiring Self Control

Self-control can be acquired. When an accident case has been admitted and we are called to help. Think of going to help the patient and that will help you through. Keep your wits about you and act, and act quickly with reason. Don't

be upset if a Doctor or a Senior Sister speaks brusquely to you then, they too are probably more anxious than you at the possible outcome of the case. Remember we are there to help human lives not to be upset ourselves!

Strict honesty is also a help all round. If you have forgotten to do something, acknowledge it simply. If things seem to go wrong, report it. I remember being reported by a gynaecological surgeon that I had allowed a new born baby to bleed from the cord, and it was attributed to my badly placing on the forceps. It went up to the Matron and all the heads of different departments in the hospital. The Matron called me and asked me for an explanation. I answered that the doctor had applied the cord forceps and the bleeding was there when I went to exchange the forceps for a cord tie. Matrons' comment was "why didn't you come and tell me—I'm not criticizing your work, you tie countless cord ties and the babies do not bleed."

Another time I was assigned to give I.V. injections in an unusually large dose to a debilitated patient. I knew the possible effects—an abscess. On the second day redness appeared which I did not report. The following morning the swelling appeared and a nurse, not myself, rightly reported it. I was very afraid and dreaded the doctor coming. He came, called me and said I'm sorry about this, I put you on this case because I knew you had much experience in different injections. But don't worry, it could have happened to me or to anyone else. We are not condemning you, only, you should have reported it yourself!

You see what qualities a nurse needs and she has to cultivate them herself. For a nurse we are greatly helped by Our Lord's own words "Do not be afraid, I am with you always." For all of us who believe in God, we can take these words to ourselves even though we do not call ourselves Christian so far, for truly we are all His children and He cares for each one of us, nurses and patients alike, and truly is really present with us in all eventualities.