

**ON NURSES AND NURSING:
WITH ESPECIAL REFERENCE
TO THE MANAGEMENT OF
SICK WOMEN**

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On Nurses and Nursing: With Especial Reference to the Management of Sick Women by
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HORATIO ROBINSON STORER

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TO

FRANCES S. MACKENZIE,

SISTER-SUPERIOR OF THE FRANCISCAN HOSPITAL,

HERSELF A REALIZATION OF THE PICTURE

DRAWN OF THE GOOD NURSE BY

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL.

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ON NURSES AND NURSING ;

WITH

ESPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE MANAGE-
MENT OF SICK WOMEN.

THE need of a more thorough preparation for their duties by those intrusted with the care of the sick, — more especially where these invalids are women, — seems already to have been felt. Attempts have been made to supply this want, but usually by parties irresponsible or incompetent, who have, therefore, not secured general confidence, and have failed. Under these circumstances, I might well shrink from undertaking any portion of a task of such importance, and to which there has been attached so disagreeable a prejudice, did I not rely upon my readers'

forbearance and cordial coöperation. By personal example, individually, in the sick chamber, and by personal influence otherwise upon public sentiment, each one can elevate the standard of expectation, as of practice.

And here, at the outset, I shall say a word concerning our New England nurses, as compared with their sisters elsewhere, in this country and abroad. Speaking from a somewhat extended observation of both, I may be allowed to possess an unbiased opinion.

As a class, and on the whole,—I must be permitted thus to generalize, for I think that not one of them would be willing to claim for herself entire perfection,—I consider our own nurses superior to the generality of professional nurses elsewhere. They have not that wholly self-sacrificing devotion to others that characterizes the Sisters of Charity. How, indeed, is this possible, without the organization of that sister-

hood, with its peculiar education, and utter consecration of self to a religious idea? Nor have they all of them that thorough knowledge of themselves physically, and of the art of nearly indefinitely preserving their freshness and youth, which gives to the best specimen of the French attendant her demure and often bewitching charm. But, on the other hand, they have all the experience that a woman's life can bring. They have most of them passed through the trials of maternity, and know its pains, anxieties, and cravings for sympathy. They are generally intelligent and devout, doing their duty, for the most part, without fear or favor, and striving, so far as in them lies, to fulfil all the needs of their sacred calling.

A nurse's toil is great, her duties often disgusting, her pecuniary remuneration small in comparison with her requirements and her labors; so that there is nothing to invite the coöperation of the better class of women, save the highest motives which can influ-

ence the true Christian. At one moment, the selfishness and irritability of the sufferer may require strong control; at another time, her dejection and bodily weakness demand the utmost sympathy, tenderness, and judgment. It is necessary to rebuke the self-righteous; to solace the broken-hearted; to strengthen and comfort the feeble; to drop words of peace into the disturbed and softened mind; to smooth and to sanctify the passage through the valley of the shadow of death.

It is not, however, to nurses, as such, nor of them merely, that I would speak. My subject necessarily embraces much of direct and powerful influence upon any woman's own health, and consequently upon that of her offspring. No woman should be ignorant of the fact that there are a large number of diseases peculiar to her sex, and requiring especial care in their treatment; that of these, while all are not directly and entirely curable, the majority can be guarded

against and prevented; and that all can be very much, and often fatally, aggravated by neglect.

But besides the individual interest that each woman should take in this subject, as liable, sooner or later, to become a sufferer, and so, in her own person, to realize all that I have thus adverted to, there are none that will not probably, at one time or another, be called upon, in the case of a member of their own family or a friend, practically to illustrate what may here be spoken of. The necessity, therefore, for an intimate acquaintance with the principles of nursing, and, indeed, with the symptoms and general treatment, preventive and palliative, of the more important diseases of women, must be very evident. It would be impossible to cover more than a fragment of the ground referred to within the limits that I have now assigned to myself; but it will be my aim to impress the importance of the whole subject upon the minds of my readers by constant and