

"If I am to help you practically, Nell, I may have to find fault," said Maggie.

"Yes—why, of course you must, but as you have not seen me trying my hand at nursing, I don't know how you can find fault."

Maggie smiled.

"There is your Aunt Elsie, see what an invalid she is."

"Oh, yes, of course, but her maid whom she has had all her life waits upon her, and I have very little to do with it."

"I know you are very attentive to her in reading to her and bringing her flowers," said Maggie, "and she told me yesterday you were her sunshine."

"Did she—how nice of her? Well, it's about the only sunshine she gets," I answered, "for her room seems always cold and dull."

"Now comes my first bit of fault-finding," said Maggie. "Why should she have that particular room?"

"I don't know, Maggie, excepting that it has always been hers ever since she came to live with us. Now I come to think of it, as she has to live in her room, perhaps a sunnier one would be better."

"Yes, and very much healthier. South or south-west are the best aspects. Do you know, Nell, that sunshine in itself is health-giving. The Romans had sun-baths two thousand years ago."

"Oh, and now I come to think of it, they have them at Lucerne."

"Yes, and sunlight has the power of checking the growth of germs, and burns up what is classed generally as effete matter."

"Certainly Aunt Elsie could have the room at the end of the west wing, only it is rather out of the way."

"All the quieter for her," said Maggie, "and if I remember rightly there is a room opening out of it."

"Yes, there is."

"Well, supposing we propose it to your aunt. Come, let us go up at once."

And we went.

It was a lovely afternoon—we are just at the end of October—but Aunt Elsie's room certainly struck me as cold and dark-looking, though it certainly was not chilly in other respects, for there was a big fire and the room was very hot. Aunt Elsie was not up, and lay quite sunk down in her feather bed, and her pillows did not look comfortable. She liked the idea of a change into another room very much, and Maggie quite won her heart by telling her that she was sure she would be better in her new quarters. It was great fun preparing the rooms for Aunt Elsie, and Maggie and I worked with a will.

"I wish we had a glazed paper on the walls!" said Maggie as we paused in our labours of staining a deep border of oak colour all round the room. "It can be kept clean so much more easily, as it can be wiped down with a damp cloth; however, this must do for the present. I am glad Joanna cleaned the rooms so well."

"She was astonished at your insisting upon the ceiling and walls being dusted," I said. "It would never have occurred to me."

"It is quite as important that they should be kept clean as any other part of the room. Now those pieces of carpet nicely bound will be ever so much better than having carpet all over the place, as they can be taken up and shaken. Tell me, Nell, do you think your aunt clings to that dreadful feather-bed?"

"I don't know. Why, what is the matter with it?"

"They are hot, unhealthy, and generally uncomfortable," said Maggie, "and the person is apt to get into the most uncomfortable holes. Of course, for sickness as for health, the best kind of bed—"

"Oh, wait a minute!" I said hurriedly.

"I have started a note-book, and am going to

write down things unless they are such that I am sure I can remember them."

"Very well, then."

*The Bed.*—An iron bedstead six feet six inches long and three feet wide is a good size. A wider bedstead gives the nurse a great deal of trouble in reaching over, and with the width named she can reach the patient easily from both sides of the bed.

Proper bedding should consist of two horse-hair mattresses, or one horse-hair mattress placed on a pailasse. The best of all, however, are spring mattresses, or chain-mail beds with a hair or wool and hair mattress on the top. If you have a feather bed which must be used, place it under the mattress.

The bed should never be placed with one side against the wall, and the light should not fall on the occupant's face, as that is very tiring to the eyes. If possible, the bedstead should stand between the fire-place and the door.

Cotton sheets, light warm blankets, and, for extra warmth, an eider-down quilt are required for a bed. The quilt should be one of the ventilated ones. Heavy cotton counterpanes are always objectionable.

If a bolster is used, it should be placed in a case by itself and not rolled up in the top of the sheet. Several pillows are necessary, the underneath ones not being too soft.

"I have written all that down," I said as Maggie paused. "I doubt very much if Aunt Elsie will submit to having the feather-bed placed under the mattress though it is a nice soft one."

"We must not worry her," said Maggie; "but see if we can't make alterations gradually. I am glad to see that hers is an iron bed and not a wooden one. We must hang up some pictures to-morrow, Nell; I noticed that her walls were very bare."

"Yes, so they are," I answered; "but I never heard her complain, and certainly I never noticed it."

"We might look about and see if we cannot find something that can brighten the walls and make the room pretty. It is nice for an invalid to have something cheerful to look at, and pictures often suggest good thoughts. Now I think the next thing for us to see about are the windows."

"Yes, the housemaid can clean them to-morrow morning," I remarked; "and then we can paste them up."

Maggie stared at me.

"I suppose you did not notice in Aunt Elsie's room that there was paper pasted over the crevices between the sashes and the woodwork? You see that she objects to draughts."

"But how can the windows be opened to air the room?" asked Maggie who looked thunderstruck.

"They never are opened through the winter. The pasted paper is washed off for the summer months," I said calmly.

"I don't wonder now at your aunt's complexion," said Maggie, and then she gave me a long discourse upon fresh air, and I entered her remarks in my note-book.

*Ventilation.*—The air of a sick-room should be always kept quite fresh, and by careful ventilation alone can this be secured. Ventilation really means fresh outer air replacing the inside air which has been made impure in many ways.

A fire greatly contributes to the cheerfulness of a room and helps ventilation. If the temperature falls below 58° Fahr., it should always be lighted. A fire produces a diffused current of air in the direction of the chimney, and ensures the air of the room being often changed. At those seasons when you do not need a fire in a sick-room, a lamp kept burning in the fire-place very materially assists the ventilation of the room by drawing the bad air up the chimney.

*Night Air.*—With respect to night air, of course there are times during the night as well as the day when the outer atmosphere is damp, keen, or foggy, must not be allowed to enter; but that is not often the case, even in winter. As Miss Nightingale asked, years ago, very truly, "What air can we breathe at night except night air?"

"I wish you had some books that you could lend me," I said as I finished writing this down. "Have you any with you?"

"I am afraid I have not," said Maggie, "but as you only really need the very first principles of nursing, I think I can tell you all you want to know. But stay, I may have a note-book or two of my own with me, and I will go and see." And she went up-stairs and brought down a little manuscript book in which were notes and quotations from books she had studied and just what I wanted myself.

There was a paragraph on how to avoid draughts taken from a manual of nursing which I straightway copied into my book.

*How to avoid Draughts.*—It should be remembered that windows opened at the bottom are likely to create a draught on a level with the patient, and are, therefore, dangerous, unless carefully managed. An excellent plan of arranging an open window is to open the lower sash a few inches from the bottom, and to fasten a wooden board, eight to ten inches deep, across the lower opening, or to fit a piece of wood accurately in, and close the opening beneath the sash. The air thus enters at the middle, where the raised lower sash overlaps the lower end of the upper one, and the current is directed upwards towards the ceiling, and is thus gradually diffused through the room without draught. When the room does not admit of ventilation by this means, other substitutes must be employed. For example, the windows in adjoining rooms or passages may be opened and air admitted, or the door may be opened and a current of air created by shaking a clean towel or sheet about the room. In very cold or windy weather, when it is impossible to keep windows always open, the room should be aired several times a day, the patient being entirely covered up; the window may be thrown open and if necessary the door also for a few minutes, until the air has been changed and feels fresh. If the patient is able to leave the room, advantage should be taken of his absence to have it thoroughly aired and warmed again before his return. Amongst the poor, the nurse will find the greatest objection to having windows open, partly from ignorance and partly from dread of draughts, and she will have to be on her guard that the windows are not shut directly her back is turned. This is especially necessary at night, when it is of the utmost importance to keep the air fresh.

"I should not think this book of much use to you now," I said, as I handed it back to Maggie. "You are a trained nurse and must know all these things by heart."

"Yes, I do," said Maggie; "but I keep it because it is of use to me when I am lecturing on simple home-nursing as I sometimes do, and it refreshes my memory as to what it is needful to teach people. You see, once that we nurses have our regular hospital work, we are so much accustomed to everything being done on hygienic laws, that we are apt to forget that many people who come to lectures to learn about nursing do not know the very first principles of the laws of health. I mean of the value of cleanliness, fresh air, etc."

"And need to be told not to paste up the windows," I said. "To-morrow, Maggie, I am going to ask you a lot of questions and write down your answers."

"Very well," said Maggie. "I am willing."

(To be continued.)