

## HINTS ON HOME NURSING.

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*(Continued from page 86.)*

## 3. THE BED.



THE making and keeping of a patient's bed is, it is easy to see, largely responsible for his comfort, temper, sleep, and, in fact, his health. And it may not be out of place to remark in passing that, though a patient may be nursed on any kind of couch, or on nothing but a mattress or even straw or sacking, and get well, yet iron bedsteads are the best kind. They are light, and therefore more easily moved than wooden ones. They are clean, and can easily be kept clean, while other kinds harbour insects. They are open, and therefore airy, and do not contract any close or unpleasant smell.

(i) The position of the bed in the sick-room is a very important matter. And though it may be impossible in many cases, owing to want of space, to attend to all the following directions, yet it may be worth while to say what should be done, where and when it is possible.

The bed should be so placed that the air may circulate freely all round it. It should *not* be pushed tightly against the wall, or be closely surrounded by heavy pieces of furniture, in such a way that while the bed is being made a constant and fatiguing warfare has at the same time to be waged with the chest of drawers or the washstand. Nor should the bed be placed so that a door or a window opens full upon it. A window brings too strong a light, and a draught, and a door introduces bad air, the effects of which may be mitigated, if it does not blow full upon the patient's bed. It is also bad for a sick person to be worried by being obliged to be conscious of every opening and shutting of the door. In many rooms it is of course impossible to do anything but make the best of things as they are, and an unavoidable draught should be counteracted

by a curtain, and a glaring light by a dark blind, while between the bed and a door that is too near it a screen made of a clothes-horse with a sheet hung over it may be placed with very beneficial effects.

The space underneath the bed should *not* be used as a store closet for the family boxes or anything else. By such obstructions dust is collected, and the free passage of the air hindered. Above all things, no secretions from the sick person should be allowed to remain there. They give off bad gases, which penetrate the mattress, and make it unwholesome for the patient to lie on. Fresh, pure air is so essential to a good recovery, that everything which may hinder its free circulation should be carefully avoided. It is therefore advisable to remove the valance from the lower part of the bed, and the curtains from the head, if there are any such obstructions.

(ii) The bed-clothing should possess two qualifications—warmth and lightness. Covering to be warm need not be weighty, and when a person is weak and ill a heavy quilt is the worst thing he can have on him. Two light quilts are much better than a single heavy one, though one of the latter kind is often really useful, if folded lengthwise and put across the foot of the bed with the ends tucked in firmly on each side. A patient often likes to feel weight on his feet, and the feet ought to be kept extra warm, and especially if the circulation is known to be poor.

(iii) It is, of course, impossible to be too particular about the cleanliness of the patient's bed. The mattress must have no evil smell, or if it has, it must be thoroughly cleansed as soon as possible. The bed-clothes—sheets and blankets—must be always clean, and this often means a great deal of work, even washing sheets every day in some cases. The patient must never be allowed to lie wet or damp. He must be *kept* dry, and all discharges must be cleared away as soon as discovered. It is advisable to have a "draw-sheet"—i.e., a sheet folded and laid lengthwise across the middle of the bed, with the ends tucked in in such a way as that it may easily be