

A MINISTERING ANGEL.

By JOSEPHA CRANE, Author of "Winifred's Home," etc.

CHAPTER II.

SICK ROOM DON'TS.

"MAGGIE," I said, next day to my friend, "the reason why I want particularly to learn all I can about nursing is that it will not only make me more useful at home in case of illness, but also in the village as I told you yesterday."

"Yes, so you said yesterday," said Maggie. "Of course you have no village nurse."

I shook my head.

"And father lets me go sometimes and see sick people."

"You might be of great help to them," said Maggie, "if you could put them in the way of nursing their sick with a little intelligence."

"They say a little knowledge is a dangerous thing," I said.

"Yes, granted if that little knowledge is tried to be used about things and subjects of which the person knows nothing. But I do not think you will do much harm with the lessons I am giving you now."

"Well, here is my notebook," I said; "do begin."

"I am going to put the lesson in the form of 'don'ts,' and they will be easy to remember."

Don't have strongly scented flowers in a sick-room. Those which have no perfume are desirable, as they make a room look cheerful. But be careful to change the water frequently.

Don't let a sick-room be on the ground floor or basement. The quietest room is the best, and the higher up it is the better.

Don't have any carpet under the bed. Some people keep boxes under their beds and stow away all kinds of things there, thereby preventing the ventilation so necessary for a healthy bed. This rule should obtain at all times whether people are ill or well.

Don't forget when a window is open at the top that in foggy or very cold weather the air should be filtered by your having nailed a piece of flannel across the aperture. In towns, too, it is a good plan to nail a piece of gauze across the open space, as that prevents the entrance of smuts, and in the country it is equally useful in keeping out insects.

Don't hang a thermometer near a fireplace or a window. The proper place for it is on the wall either at the top of the bed or as close to the patient's head as can be managed.

An ordinary thermometer should be in every house; it costs but little, and in some cases of illness is an absolute necessity. From 60° to 70° F. is the usual temperature for a sick-room, and the nurse should make it her care to keep the room at the same temperature, avoiding more than a degree or two during the twenty-four hours.

Two o'clock in the morning is the coldest and three o'clock in the afternoon the hottest time of the day, and you must look at your thermometer at these times and see that it does not rise or fall.

To prevent this you can draw a blind down more in the heat, and at night, if you are up with a sick person, or have to keep their fire in, pay particular attention to it at that time.

Don't keep fire-irons in a sick-room. They only cause noise and are in the way. An old walking-stick is an excellent substitute for a poker. To brush up the hearth and so keep the fireplace in order can be done noiselessly, but to scrape up the cinders with the shovel causes sounds which are little less than torture to some people when they are ill, and are certainly very disagreeable at all times. In cases where all noise must be avoided, it is a very good plan to strew about an inch of earth

under the grate. Then the ashes and cinders fall upon it, making no sound, and when you want to remove them you can do so almost unheard, as you run your shovel into the earth and lift up some of it with the cinders on it.

Don't keep up a fire at night by placing coals on it in the ordinary way which causes more or less noise. Put on a pair of house-maid's gloves, or one only is enough, and taking up the coals in your fingers make up the fire gently. Another excellent plan is to have your coal-scuttle made up for you before you settle your patient down for the night. Let the coals be placed in paper bags and the scuttle filled with them. When the fire needs renewal all you have to do is to place one or more bags on it, and as the paper soon burns the coals do their duty.

Don't omit to soap the window-cords so that they may work quietly, and it is well to oil hinges and locks of doors for the same reason.

Don't crowd the washstand with medicine bottles, etc. If you have a cupboard in the room keep all such things in it, and if not they can be kept in an adjoining room. Failing that you can make a good medicine cupboard if you do not already possess those sold for the purpose.

"How can that be done?" I inquired, for I was getting tired of writing down the Don'ts, and Maggie saw it.

"Any old fruit box or soap box can answer the purpose," said Maggie. "Have you such a thing in the house?"

I thought we had, and as I returned very shortly with a good large one we set to work after lunch in arranging it.

Tom, who loves anything to do with carpentering, gave willing assistance, and having taken off the top of the box which was useless, he planed it nicely and lined it all with glazed paper. The outside we covered with American cloth, and then we nailed a frill all along the upper edge, for we were supposing the box to be used in the same position as when lying on its side. This frill or curtain was cut up the middle, and thus the future contents would be kept nicely protected from the dust. Tom ran to the village to buy four strong eyes at the shop where all kinds of things are kept, and we nailed them on to the box, and then by their aid fastened the home-made medicine cupboard into its place in Aunt Elsie's new room.

"How far are you from a doctor here?" asked Maggie.

"Four miles," I said. "Why do you ask?"

"Because it makes it all the more important that you should have a cupboard set apart for things likely to be needed in case of accident or illness."

"There is a small cupboard with two shelves in the store-room," I said; "would that do."

"Capitally. On one shelf you should place all poisons and things for external application apart from the others."

"What ought to be in the cupboard?" I asked, and Maggie gave me this list, saying as she did so that she had named only a few essentials, and that the list might be extended very much.

THE MEDICINE CUPBOARD.

Castor oil, sal volatile, hazeline, powdered borax, Rigouot's mustard leaves, cascara tincture or tablets, oiled silk rag and lint, essence of ginger, Condy's fluid or any disinfectant, carron oil, mustard flour in a tin, linseed meal

in a tin, zinc powder and zinc ointment, glycerine, medicated cotton wool, flannel for compresses.

The following articles should also always be kept among others which will suggest themselves to every one:—

An india-rubber hot water bottle, a clinical thermometer, a graduated medicine glass, a drop measure, an air-cushion, a feeding-cup, a spatula, a wire-handled throat brush, some bandages and safety-pins, patent food-warmer and night-lights.

"Remember," said Maggie, "that all poisons should be kept in coloured bottles and labelled poison, as well as being kept on a shelf apart. You cannot be too careful, Nell, if you have a cupboard of this kind in a house about keeping the key or at least letting it be known where it is kept and leaving the door always locked, for fear of children or servants tampering with its contents."

"What is a feeding cup used for?" I asked.

"For a patient who is too ill or too weak to sit up. If you have not a proper feeding-cup at any time that one is needed, a small earthenware tea-pot answers the purpose if you are careful only to fill it about half, and not to remove the cover."

"When I can I shall get all these things," I said. "And now, Maggie, about giving medicines, are there not some rules?"

"Certainly there are, and I will tell them to you," said Maggie, as I got out my pencil again.

"You should always read the label on the bottle of medicine. Give the medicine at the time ordered. When medicine is directed to be taken three times a day it should be given at 10 A.M., 2 P.M. and 6 P.M. When it is ordered to be taken every four hours, it should be taken at 8 A.M., 12 noon, 4 P.M. and 8 P.M.

"Never give a medicine during the night unless the doctor expressly says you are to do so.

"If medicine has to be taken every two hours it is supposed that it is to be given during the night.

"Always measure the dose accurately in a medicine glass, and do not rely on the marks on the bottle, which are not always to be trusted.

"If a medicine is to be given 'after food,' it must only be administered if food has been taken.

"Medicines should always be shaken before being poured out, and you should hold the bottle so that the label side is upward. This prevents any drops of the liquid defacing the writing on the label and rendering it illegible.

"Always clean a medicine glass after using it, and keep a separate glass for oil or any medicines which have a very strong taste.

"After taking a nasty or acid medicine the sick person should wash out his mouth, and if he eats a crust of bread or a biscuit it will help in removing the taste.

"There should always be an interval of half an hour between taking a medicine and a meal. There are however, exceptions. Some medicines such as cod-liver oil, malt and tonics of arsenic and iron are generally taken at or very soon after a meal.

"The last thing at night or early in the morning is the best time for all medicines of an aperient nature, and should be followed by a hot drink a little time afterwards."

"Are there not ways of taking medicines so as to disguise their taste?" I inquired.