

truly what was the matter with their sick friend, but on no account to let the sick one herself know the nature of her malady. Not only do the friends almost invariably take this course, but, strange to say, I have known the patient herself beg that I would not tell her the truth.

Notwithstanding all this, I venture to differ from these doctors, from the patients and their friends, and I wish to enter a firm protest against any other course being adopted than to tell the truth every time; and I think I can show that this is our duty for many reasons. For those (and I hope they are few) who require any other argument than duty, I think that I can prove that it does not pay to deceive a patient even under the mistaken idea that good may come of it.

I am not saying anything about telling the friends what is the matter; for when they have brought me a patient and mysteriously called me to one side to whisper that I could tell them, but not to tell the patient, I have often said to them, "the patient is the only one who has any right to know; what is the matter with her and what she tells me are alike profound secrets; I will tell her and she can tell you if she likes; but I will not tell any one else."

Is it right to tell the truth? At first sight I will admit that it appears more humane not to tell a woman that she has cancer of the womb, but in reality this course is most cruel; for, in each of the three stages into which I will divide the progress of the disease, the woman has an immense stake at risk; she has everything to lose and nothing to gain by being kept in ignorance of her actual condition, and she has a right to know it whether she wants to or not, from the moment the physician knows it himself. In the first stage of cancer of the womb the disease is absolutely local; that is to say it occupies a small spot on the angle of a laceration or is limited to the endometrium. During this stage the disease is positively and entirely curable by the removal of the womb. Vaginal hysterectomy for cancer in this stage by a good operator has at the present time a death rate of two or three per cent. at the very most. Alas, it is bad enough to think that so few cases are even diagnosed at this stage, without wishing that the few which are diagnosed