

It is the lax and slovenly habit of mind that finds its expression in a lax and slovenly habit of body.

Instinctive, natural purity is a grand thing, but like all so-called *natural* virtues, its preservation depends greatly on proper self-discipline, and the first downward step in a nurse's career is often undoubtedly taken when she relinquishes that careful attention to her person, which was almost a second nature to her, while under the moral control of home influence.

No man, says a wise old saying, ever committed a murder in a clean shirt, the man's mind had first to become demoralised and weakened, freed from that restraint of self-discipline whose first manifestation is a disregard of personal discipline of body. A man must have lost his self-respect before he stoops to crime.

So are cleanliness and self-respect the sentinels that protect a nurse's moral purity, and the more carefully the outposts are guarded, the safer will be the inner works.

None know better than nurses the deadly fatigue they often feel when they "come off duty," the tremendous effort it often requires to get up in time in the morning to perform more than a hurried toilet, the utter depression and poverty of will power due to sheer weariness they often have to contend against.

At such times it is that a woman who allows her moral sentinel to slumber falls under the influence of the most dangerous enemies a nurse has to guard against—those drugs and stimulants which, first taken to give momentary relief or strength, become her terrible tyrants, degrading her moral sense until it becomes incapable of distinguishing right and wrong, and she becomes deaf to the voice of reason and duty.

Nothing is more dangerous than the first weakness of moral strength that leads a nurse to fly for relief to chloral, morphia, and allied drugs or stimulants. The opiate may be taken in the first instance to gain sleep when she is perhaps racked with toothache or unable to sleep readily during the day, on night duty, or the stimulant is resorted to to carry her through an exceptionally fatiguing day, when she is feeling worn out. But the ease with which the stimulants and drugs are obtained, the comfort or momentary elation that follows their first use, leads to their being repeated again and again, till the nurse is morally incapable of resisting the physical temptation of self-indulgence they offer her. For nurses should remember that the strain they have to bear is not intermittent, the work that has to be done to-day must be repeated to-morrow; it is not a case of making one supreme effort and it is all over. The call that is made on the nurse's physical and mental powers is continuous, practically endless, and if she cannot strengthen them to respond to the demand, stimulation will only rouse her

powers for a time, to wreck them ultimately beyond repair. Sleep first gained by drugs may be at last impossible without their aid, and I have known a nurse who never went to bed without a stiff dose of chloral, that required to be continually increased to fulfil its purpose, with what results may be imagined.

Half the moral degradation in the world is the direct result of weak self-indulgence. Under the influence of demoralising drugs or stimulants no woman retains the natural energy, strength, and purity of her character; and a nurse who possesses the knowledge of their insidious and terrible properties, and yet gives way to their influence, must indeed be lacking in all moral firmness; for can anything in the world be a sadder sight than the hopeless victim of morphia or drink? The woman whose sole object in life is to satisfy her craving for the fatal poison that has ruined her, who has lost all sense of social morality, or even native decency, to whom truth is a blurred, uncertain, or utterly obliterated image, and in whose distorted mind cunning and fraud have taken the place of natural rectitude.

But apart from such extreme results the constant use of such drugs and stimulants is always followed by weakness of character and purpose, failure of moral power, indifference to higher aims and incapability of sustained effort.

Thus nursing, like all professions that take women from the shelter of home-life, has its undoubted dangers and temptations, and demands from them an unusually large amount of self-control and self-respect, but it certainly does *not* require them to leave their purity at the threshold of their career. It requires them, on the contrary, to be more than ever on their guard against even the slightest levity of thought or word, more careful of the outer purity of person and manner.

Living away from the protection of her home, a nurse, though she may, and often does, receive the greatest encouragement and assistance from those around her, is still mainly dependent on her own strength and character, on the thoroughness of her own self-discipline, for power to resist self-indulgence and laxity of moral courage. Conscious of the immense influence for good or evil her example must have on those entrusted to her care, a nurse's life should not only be truly blameless in thought, word, and deed, but, in its singleness of purpose, above even the suspicion of evil; she should avoid even the semblance of frivolity or a flippant disregard for perfect purity; and it is in the sustaining power, the refining influence of that utter purity that she will find her most perfect safeguard against many of those temptations, difficulties and trials that must beset her path.

"Let her be chaste" in the sense of the Sermon on the Mount,

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