

in its grandeur; she has found that there is still no answer to the question, "What is life?" and is content to believe that God gave life at the beginning, and that we inherit it; she smiles at some of the definitions of life, such as, "Life is the vital force," the "power within," the "vital spark," the "most subtle agent in nature," &c., for she has sense to see that none of these definitions answer the question, and she falls back with confidence upon, "God breathed into man, and he became a living soul." She knows that man cannot define life, although he is certain he possesses it, any more than he can define mind, or soul. This knowledge is somewhat comforting to our efficient nurse, for she reasons that if it be impossible to define the one, why insist upon defining the others; and if we must leave the one question unanswered, and yet be possessed of life, surely we may leave the others unanswered also, and still say we are possessed of mind, and have each a soul also.

The study of physiology has taught our nurse how the various organs of the body make a perfect whole; how each organ has its own work, and also how the several organs are dependent upon each other for the harmonious or healthy working of the whole body, so "fearfully and wonderfully made." She has gained so much knowledge about healthy natural life, that she readily understands the difference disease is causing in any unhealthy organ, and the ill consequences such disease must have upon other organs, and how, indeed, the ill effects must soon be felt through the whole system: for instance, how pneumonia hinders the perfect oxygenation of the blood which should be effected in the lungs; how the impure blood is passed into the circulation, and the whole body suffers; the heart itself is, as it were, troubled—quivers almost as if it were a sensible thing, anxious to withstand the ill it is compelled to do; how that most delicate part, the brain, is quickly disordered, and delirium soon results. Again, the study of physiology has taught our nurse the importance of good and suitable food, enough in quantity, and not too much; it has taught her how food is digested, absorbed, changed into blood, conveyed into the circulation, purified in the lungs, and then sent by the heart—that wonderful force-pump—all over the system, carrying in its grand rivers all that each organ and structure requires. She has learned that food builds us up, nourishes us, warms us—indeed, becomes our very being, and, in a certain sense, our life. She has learned how important digestion is, and that it must begin in the mouth; also that it is not what we eat, but what we digest, that is useful to us; that if we eat what we cannot digest we only, as it were, attempt to burn stone, and can scarcely get rid of it. She has discovered that no absolute rule can be laid down for anyone as to what to eat, or how much, but that the proportion of meals must be according to the

real wants of the system; that manner of life has much to do with the returns of appetite; that the stomach should never be overburdened, or indigestion and its evil consequences will result, and that then the blood becomes tainted, or lowered in quality, and so in its turn cannot give the nourishment it should to the different parts it serves. An efficient nurse discriminates between the indigestion of poverty and the indigestion of gluttony: in the former case she gives nourishing food, and for the latter uses her influence to ensure judicious fasting.

Physiology has taught her respect, almost amounting to veneration, for the nervous system. She does not think too lightly of diseases that are classed as "nervous." She knows that when the nerves are, as we say, "unstrung" the whole system is in a distressed and pitiable condition. She knows how the nervous and physical (if I may use one term as separate from the other) systems cannot be separated from one another; how each is dependent upon the other, and how when the nervous system is suffering other physical diseases begin. She knows that a pure, active, sensible life is best for both physical and mental health; and she uses her gentle influence to impart such knowledge where it is needed.

She does not give or recommend alcoholic stimulant, except as ordered by the doctor, but treats it as she would any other powerful medicine. She is careful to make her patients *comfortable*, knowing that comfort helps nature and the doctor to cure both mental and physical diseases. Physiology has taught her what an interlaced forest there is within us of blood-vessels, nerves, and lymphatic vessels. She has seen, too, the great similarity of the skeletons of vertebrate animals. This similarity says to her that God's perfect plan needed only slight variations to adapt it to the different lives and uses of many creatures.

Perhaps enough has been said about physiology. Let me just say—all this knowledge, and more, does not unfit her for her work. She sees how vast the subject is, and to the wonder of a student—not the wonder of an ignorant person—is added a thrill of silent ecstasy, as she sees the great subject of physiology stretching out, like the love of God, deeper, wider, longer, broader, limitless. Such a student is humble, for she sees how little she is, except as a creation of God. The more she learns, the more humble and thankful she becomes. Our efficient nurse is not conceited; she has learned how little she knows.

Our nurse knows so much of descriptive anatomy that she can say at once where each organ of the body is situated, and she understands the doctor when he tells her he wants his treatment applied over or near any particular part. Pathology she knows is the opposite of physiology, that it treats of diseases and their effects.

An efficient nurse is equally capable in the

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