

On the Training of Sick Nurses.*

BY HENRY E. CLARK,

Professor of Surgery in St. Mungo's College, Glasgow.

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FOR the success of a scheme so elaborate as this I have briefly sketched it is necessary that it should be carried out loyally and earnestly by pupils and teachers alike. I would especially urge on you, who are just commencing the course, to take advantage of every opportunity offered you for learning every detail of your profession. Consider nothing too trivial, nothing too elementary to deserve notice, and do not forget that it is accuracy in detail which is demanded of you, and that your success as a Nurse will depend very much on your care and attention in little things. It will often happen that some disagreeable duty will be imposed upon you—some work which, though necessary, revolts your feelings and wounds your sensibility; do not shirk it, but boldly face all that is required of you; it is especially in such trials that your capacity for the work will be shown. It often happens that a Probationer gets much attached to the wards in which she has seen most service, and is very unwilling to be transferred to another sphere of duty. We "chiefs" appreciate very highly the loyalty and attachment of our Nurses; but we often see that we are not acting in the best interests of the Nurses themselves if we seek to detain them, during their probationary period, too long in one set of wards. By all means avoid narrowing yourself down to medical nursing, surgical nursing, or gynæcological nursing—see them all, and learn what is to be done in them all. Nay, more, though it be a little repugnant to your feelings, and though it disturb the calm tenour of your life, be ready, as opportunity permits, to do duty in different wards, so as to learn the different fads and fancies of different physicians and of different surgeons. Strive to fall in with their ways, and gather all they can teach.

With all your work, do not forget to play. The hours of work for the Probationers are so arranged as to leave certain hours daily for rest and relaxation; do not spend these in the wards, or even in your own rooms; get out of doors whenever the weather at all allows, and walk whenever walking is possible. It has been a source of disappointment to Dr. Thomas that so little use has been made of the Nurses' tennis-court—and in this feeling I entirely sympathize with him. It is now too late in the year to expect a revival of tennis enthusiasm; but I venture to express a hope that when the spring visits us once again, we may find rackets in requisition and tennis-balls at a pre-

mium, and that no fair day may pass without its due record of "setts" lost or won.

The life of a Nurse is one of much toil and trial; it needs a healthy body and a sound mind; a sanguine temperament and a contented disposition are also great aids, and do much to minimise the fret and worry incidental to a Nurse's life.

When asked what are the chief qualifications which are required of one who would be a Nurse, I sometimes astonish my questioners by stating as the first essential, *good health*; and, although the reduction in the hours which Nurses work has very properly diminished the strain put upon them, it is still true that only those of sound constitution are fit to stand the depressing influences of the sick-room or the hospital ward.

I do not regard it as essential that the Probationer should take up Nursing as a religious duty, for many of those actuated by this motive are, by the fineness of their sympathies and their nervous tension, rendered totally unreliable in the emergencies which try even the coolest Nurses. The religious duty of every individual is (to my mind) to do that work for which each is best fitted, whenever it is possible to obtain that work. The introduction of the religious element into Nursing has led, in many cases, on the other hand, to the "selection of the unfittest," and to ladies entering on the work as an act of self-denial, a crucifixion of the flesh, and not from any special adaptation—physical, mental, or spiritual—for the burden they are taking up. When, further, the question of the religious opinions and profession of the Probationer comes into the question of her fitness for the work of nursing the sick, the evil becomes intensified, and there is little wonder that under such conditions unsatisfactory results should follow. Fortunately, we in Scotland have seen very little of the Nursing Sisterhoods of a religious character such as exist in England; but I think it is a pity that we have, in some measure, adopted their titles, and that the name "Sister" should be given to Staff Nurses in some of our Hospitals. The title has, in truth, no meaning, unless the Nurse belongs to a religious sisterhood; and, surely, it is possible to find a better name to express the position and proficiency of a Head Nurse.

Let it not be supposed that I undervalue the influence of religion in quickening the interests and perfecting the character of a Nurse. Religion raises to a "higher power" (to use a mathematical term) the *sense of duty*; it elevates our aims and interests; it sanctifies and justifies the virtues of self-denial and self-sacrifice; it quickens the sympathies—makes broader the charity, increases the tolerance; teaches cheerfulness and hope; inculcates patience and perseverance. Lastly, from it springs that equanimity and restfulness which are so essential in a sick Nurse, giving, as they do,

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