

been trained in the habits of obedience and order. But there are, even at the present day, some who term themselves Nurses who have never passed through any hospital training, and who, therefore, have never been brought under the educational influence of such discipline. Any medical man who has had any experience of thoroughly trained Nurses realises the value of their services to the sick, and the value of their assistance to himself. But, if these women were ignorant of all technical knowledge, he would find them as great a detriment in his practice as they are at present an aid; because if they were ignorant of their duties they would be as dangerous to the patient as some of the old-style Nurses were, or as some of the modern pretenders to the title are.

It is, for example, not so very long ago that a Nurse who had been sent out by an institution to a private house gave the patient a poisonous lotion to drink and with fatal results. She pleaded, if our memory is correct, that she was unaware that this particular lotion had poisonous effects, or indeed that the lotion was for outward application only. But what was more significant still, the institution which sent out this Nurse as a trustworthy person, refused to give the slightest particulars as to her training, although it was publicly challenged, more than once, to do so. The inference, therefore, is that she had not received the education and experience which is, in the Nursing world, regarded as essential for those who desire to be entrusted with the care of the sick. This case, which is unhappily by no means singular, throws a lurid light upon the possible dangers which may result to the sick from sheer ignorance on the part of their attendants; but it points also an important moral for those who consider that it is unnecessary for Nurses to know anything at all. It will seem extraordinary to the public that we should be actually compelled to state in so many words, our firm conviction that the benefit of the sick is the first consideration, and that therefore their attendants should be able to serve them efficiently; from which it follows that Nurses should be thoroughly instructed in the duties which they have to perform. Now, as those duties include not only attendance upon the sick, but also the necessity of making full and sufficient reports to medical men concerning the progress which patients make between their visits it is obvious

that Nurses, in order to know what and how to observe symptoms, must have some acquaintance, not only with the formation, but also with the mechanism of the human body; in fact, we have no hesitation in saying that it would be impossible for any trained Nurse adequately to carry out the duties entrusted to her if she did not understand the reasons for her work and the principles upon which it should be conducted.

A rule of thumb plan of procedure would inevitably prove useless in the many demands which a patient makes upon a private Nurse, while half her value to the medical man would be lost if she did not know what and how to observe and report the patient's symptoms. With regard to Anatomy, for example, it is obvious that if the Nurse were quite ignorant of this, her ministrations to a patient suffering from fracture of the thigh might be so clumsy, because so ignorant, as to be productive of the gravest harm instead of any possible benefit. In short, Nurses who are ignorant must be inefficient, and the public will, we feel confident, strongly disapprove of the sentiments to which we refer and which we are confident are only held by very few members of the medical profession.

### Lectures on Elementary Physiology in relation to Medical Nursing.

BY BEDFORD FENWICK, M.D.

*Physician to The Hospital for Women, Soho Square.*

#### LECTURE III.—DIGESTION AND INDIGESTION.

*(Continued from page 147.)*

THE very act of vomiting is itself, of course, a reversal of the peristaltic action of the stomach and œsophagus; but in the generality of cases, when the offending material is expelled, the condition ceases. But when bile is thus regurgitated, as it is for example, in cases of prolonged vomiting, it shows, in the first place, that this reversal of the peristaltic action of the intestines has extended beyond the stomach and has affected at any rate, the duodenum. And, therefore, as a sign of danger, the vomiting of digested food is still more significant. This fact explains the necessity for all vomited matters to be kept—*carefully covered over*—for the inspection of the doctor, and fœcal vomiting, as it

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)