

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 976.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1906.

Vol. XXXVII

Editorial.

SPECIALITIES.

One of the points which presents itself most clearly to nurses when they wish to take up private nursing is that they are very ill-equipped for this branch of work if they have only a three years' certificate of general training. There is quite as large a demand for nurses for maternity, gynaecological, fever and mental cases, as for ordinary medical and surgical ones, to say nothing of those who are required for patients suffering from diseases of the eye and ear, in each of which special knowledge is necessary if the patient is to have the best attention possible. A massage certificate is also a very valuable asset to a private nurse.

It is important, therefore, that nurses should bear in mind throughout their general training that when it is ended they should obtain experience in at least one special branch before they seek admission to a private nursing institution or co-operation.

Also nurses after taking up private work, will do well to add to their list of specialities. The benefit is manifold. The nurse returns to hospital for a time and thus keeps herself up-to-date in the latest methods, and it is undeniable that, however competent she may be, she is apt to fall behind the times if she does not do this. She increases her value to the public, and therefore her own earning capacity, by adding to her knowledge, and she becomes an increasingly valuable member of her Society, instead of stagnating, as years go by.

At the present day accurate knowledge is required of all skilled workers, and the fact that a woman possesses a sound basis

of general nursing knowledge does not fit her to undertake the care of cases where special knowledge is needed; unless, therefore, she takes steps to attain this, it is manifest that she will miss many cases which might have been allotted to her and that they will fall to the share of those who have been far-sighted enough to obtain special qualifications.

In attending the recent Conferences at St. George's Hall, W. one could not but be struck by the amount of special knowledge needed in each of the three branches represented. The nursing of tuberculosis is a branch of work of far-reaching importance, yet this cannot be learnt in a general hospital.

Maternity nursing is also another very important branch.

After all only a limited number of people require surgical operations. Many do not need the services of trained nurses at all until their last end. But everyone born into the world needs assistance at that time and during the first weeks of helplessness, hence the need for well-trained maternity nurses. In regard to mental nursing there is no class of sufferers who need help more sorely. It is easy to give skilled assistance to those who are suffering merely from bodily illness but "who shall minister to a mind diseased?" To fulfil this office adequately a nurse must be fortified by a knowledge only attained by special training as well as by rare qualities of heart and mind.

It may be that, with the better organisation of nursing education, opportunities of instruction in certain specialities may be afforded during the years of probation, but at the present time a nurse must rely mainly on herself to obtain this knowledge.

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