

WHAT CONSTITUTES AN EFFICIENT NURSE.

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THERE are so many essential things that belong to the making of an efficient nurse, that it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to choose out one to begin with and say this is the most essential thing. An efficient nurse must have so much knowledge and be possessed of so many excellent qualities, she must be morally, physically, and mentally so near perfection as human nature can be that her efficiency may produce such effects only as are wholly good, that, as I have already said, it is difficult to select one good quality and place it first as most necessary; but, after thinking over all the training our nurse has had, all the experience she has gained, and all the good qualities she can be possessed of, I have come to the conclusion that in my opinion thorough-going unselfishness is the most essential quality of all, as being the most enduring foundation for the making of a really good nurse. It is only by the putting away of selfishness and so by thorough devotion to the hard probation duties of unaccustomed physical work, to the sometimes trying demands of peevish patients, to the hard study of what at first seem dry subjects, to the probably unaccustomed unquestioning obedience—I say it is only by putting away selfishness all this can be attained. I do not say that self must be put away: self must be trained, educated and brought into subjection. Self will soon delight in the new life and its duties, its helpfulness, and its interests.

The next most necessary quality is, I think, a steadfast purpose. An efficient nurse must, from the beginning of her training to the end of her working life, have an earnest purpose to be a kind, good, thorough nurse. She may, perhaps, soon find that the ideal she began the work with has left her, and that nursing is sober work and at times hard enough; still she remembers that it is true woman's work, and that she may dignify it with all the true dignity of pure and earnest purpose of heart and mind.

There are many other things besides this earnest purpose which if she found she did not possess she endeavoured to cultivate, for an efficient nurse must have an observant eye, a quiet manner, a gentle voice, a dexterous hand, a quiet foot (not a perfectly silent one), unfailing patience, and very little thought about self. Her gentle voice is comforting and soothing, her dexterous hand is able to arrange her patients' beds, &c., quickly and well. She has great pleasure in the quick gratitude of her patients, who soon know when they have a good nurse, and who in the majority of cases are very grateful. She

does not "spoil" her patients, but, almost unconsciously to them, causes them to obey the doctor, and to let her carry out his directions.

She is diligent and active in her calling, zealous for the honour of her hospital and for all with whom she works. She places a high standard before her, and never says to herself, "Now I am a good nurse," for she does not forget that there is always more knowledge yet to be acquired, and more experience yet to be gained.

And now after this so far somewhat general attempt to treat of "What constitutes an efficient nurse," let me attempt (an essay is, I suppose, an attempt) to state more particularly some of the knowledge she must have gained in an hospital ward and lecture room, and then I will comment on other things that seem to me essential.

One of the first virtues an efficient nurse learned in her hospital ward was obedience. It is said, "They only can command who have learned to obey." She also learned punctuality, neatness, and exactness.

I will suppose she is fairly healthy and physically strong, she has had at least two years' medical and surgical training (and one year's fever training) in one of our large hospitals, where the thorough training of the nurses is one of the recognised duties of doctors, matron, and sisters of the hospital. She has been thorough about all her ward duties, and in earnest about doing her work and understanding the why and the wherefore of all she has had to do; she has not been content only to "get knowledge," she has been determined to "get understanding" also.

In the wards she has learned that cleanliness, ventilation, and order secure the comfort and well-doing of the patients. She notices, without seeming to notice, the want of any of these good things.

She is skilful in the various ways of managing helpless patients. She can wash them in bed without fatiguing or giving them cold. She can undress and change the clothing of surgical patients without injuring or causing them pain. She is careful to prevent and relieve bed-sores. She is skilful in all minor surgical dressings and applications—in the administration of enemata, feeding, medicinal, and cleansing; the use of the catheter, application of leeches; in the making of beds and removal of sheets whilst the patients are in bed; in the proper preparation of beds for use after operation, lithotomy, &c.; in the feeding of patients before and after operation; in the use of friction and the administration of medicines, suppositories, and sub-cutaneous injections; in making bandages, bandaging, padding splints, &c. She is economical and wastes nothing; she cuts "dressings" just the size they are needed—not considerably too large, simply that they may be snipped down to the required size: so also with poultice lotions, &c.; she prepares, as well as can be

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