

Experiences of Cholera Nursing.*

BY MISS ANNESLEY KENEALY.

I REGARD it as a great privilege and pleasure to have been invited to give an address to-night before the Royal British Nurses' Association, to which I am proud of having belonged, almost from its first formation.

As the gathering is a purely professional one I think it better to treat my subject, "The Nursing of Cholera in Hamburg," from a technical standpoint. And this seems the more advisable since we may have to face a similar outbreak in England before long, to meet which we should have as much armour ready as possible.

A few preliminary remarks on the Eppendorffer Hospital, where our work was done, should prove interesting, as this is said to be the most beautiful Hospital in the world, and was built as late as 1888 from funds granted by the State. I have seen our own best Institutions and many of the beautiful Hospitals of America, but none, in any country, which comes near the model standard of the Eppendorffer. It is arranged on the Pavilion system, is set out in blocks or squares, and stands in most beautiful grounds in the open country, thus adding much to its structural hygienic advantages.

Although, normally, it is occupied by some 1,600 patients, during the epidemic the capacity of its wards was stretched to such an extent, that nearly 2,000 patients were accommodated without unhealthy crowding. And this, although in some instances two or three children occupied the same cot, and in many of the Pavilions, the beds were so close together that the patients might almost have joined hands in a complete circle round the wards. But the ventilation was so perfect that the air was pure and good, in face of the fact that cholera, more than any other disease, save, perhaps, leprosy, tends to the rapid pollution of the atmosphere. In addition to the Hospital proper, large adjoining fields were picturesquely dotted over with canvas tents, similar to those used in the Franco-Prussian war—these with their white flags bearing the Red Cross in the centre gave one an idea of a miniature battle-field. The interiors were floored with teak, lighted by electricity, and were fitted with a bath-room and lavatory, with a full supply of hot

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and cold water. Each tent was capable of holding from 18 to 22 beds, which stood in readiness with all bedding and other requisites, while a temperature chart and a bottle of water and two mugs stood on a locker at each bedside, making these tents appear, as they were, a practical proof of the good organization of the authorities, and a ready refutation of the accusations brought against them, of mismanagement. It must be mentioned that these tents were provided and ready for use in four or five days, shewing, as was the fact, that almost military discipline obtained. On warm days the free entry of air into these tents supplied admirable ventilation, but later in the season the patients complained of them as being chilly. And one can readily imagine that they would be so to a patient in the collapse stage of cholera, and a temperature of 94° or less.

The tent and barrack accommodation was hardly used at the Eppendorffer, but we saw them in working order at the old Hospital and elsewhere.

I have no hesitation in ascribing the comparative freedom of nurses and attendants from cholera very largely to the airiness of the wards, and the position of the Hospital in the suburbs. Although several women Nurses took the disease, and all the medical staff had choleraic attacks, there were few deaths, excepting among the mortuary attendants and the laundresses.

I should regard with some horror the condition of things that would obtain, and the result to Nurses and staff, from a collection of cholera patients in a closed-in London Hospital, situated in a thickly-populated district. And I think this point should be taken into consideration, in allotting the Hospitals to be used in an epidemic.

The wards at the Eppendorffer were fitted with stone floors, which would have been cold and cheerless had it not been for the admirable heating arrangements which kept the atmosphere at an even temperature. Stone flags are very tiring to the feet, but not nearly so much so as polished floors. The advantage of stone where there are cholera patients cannot be over-rated. Twice a day the floors were deluged with a solution of Carbolic Acid or Corrosive Sublimate tending to keep the air pure and wholesome. The sturdy application of mops and the heating apparatus combined to thoroughly dry up all moisture in about half-an-hour.

It was quite startling to us, with our prejudices in favour of the traditional Matron, to find we were under the control of a man-inspector. He used frequently to have concluded a great part of his

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