

and kindness, and the happiness of forgetting self in one's efforts to help others less fortunate. It is a grand world in which to live, and even if one has to work quite hard for one's living there is always some time for fun and games and for enjoying the good things life has to offer!

Nurses today cannot plead poverty nor complain of long hours on duty. Much that has been achieved in the way of benefits for them, has had to be wrested from unwilling benefactors. We do not wish Nurses to forfeit one single benefit—indeed quite the contrary, but we can plead for *better* Nurses, for more conscientious Nurses, and for Nurses who will gladly and serenely put their patients' needs before their own convenience. Only by so doing can we hope to deliver the profession from another era of Sairey Gamps and Betsy Prigs.

G. M. H.

## The History of Mental Nursing.

By L. Goddard, S.R.N.

THERE WERE FEW CORNERS in Britain during the sixteenth century which escaped the plague of beggars that seemed suddenly to have descended upon the countryside. The vagrants roamed from parish to parish, begging and stealing as they went. Some were professional paupers; many were cripples suffering from real or pretended deformities; a few were lepers; a great many were victims of epilepsy, while the remainder were half witted beggars, imbeciles or feeble-minded vagabonds.

In 1535, severe steps were instituted to deal with this spreading evil. For a first offence, a beggar was whipped without mercy. On a second occasion the culprit's ears were cropped, while if a third breach of the peace was committed, the wretched mendicant was judged a felon and an enemy of the commonwealth, and was therefore sentenced to death.

In 1547, the penalties became more severe. A "V" was branded on the shoulder for a first conviction, thereby adjudging the person to be a slave for two years to anyone who cared to claim him. Beggars so branded were made to work by persuasion of the whip's lash, and were fed only on bread and water. If a "V" man ran away he was branded on the face with an "S" and dragged out the remainder of his existence bound in slave chains and working in the fields.

Workhouses erected in London and Westminster, were full to repletion and so many thousands of rogues and vagabonds were housed that cleanliness, or indeed the simplest fundamentals of hygiene were impossible.

The inmates were supposed to work for their food but this condition was not always enforced since the beggars gave their masters a great deal of trouble, swearing, threatening and occasionally stabbing the officials in charge of them.

The year 1723 saw the first real workhouse system commenced. Buildings were erected or hired all over the country, and as the movement developed, pauperism declined. Guardians were appointed to safeguard pauper children from neglect and improper treatment.

Workhouse unions were also introduced in 1782 by the Gilberts Act, and towards the close of the eighteenth century a great relaxation took place in the drastic treatment of the poor.

By 1828 measures were being taken to ensure provision for the pauper lunatic who, hitherto, had been faced with deplorable conditions. Six years later, the Poor Law Commission presented a report in the Poor Law Amendment Act, urging for the better management of workhouses, and the classification of their inmates.

At this time the annual cost of the poor to the public funds was about seven million pounds. Mental deficiency

and disease cost the country another eight million.

The care of the sick and mental patients in workhouse institutions was carried out by able-bodied paupers—children, sick, and mentally defectives had to be classified and kept in separate quarters.

Gradually there rose a tendency to build institutions for each of these classes. Lunatic asylums were required for the poorer classes. The justices of each county were bound to provide such an asylum or join in with some other party in keeping one, the expense being borne out of the rates. A committee of justices was appointed as visitors, similar as the workhouses were governed by a Board of Guardians.

As early as 1808 powers were granted to the Local Justices to build asylums out of local rates, but this was not compulsory until 1845.

The object of county asylums was to receive the lunatic paupers of the county, although the harmless cases were retained in the workhouses. The onus of deciding whether a patient should be sent to an asylum rested solely upon the local justices.

It was not until 1828 that patients of the private class required the attestation of two medical men before entering an asylum. Previously only one was required and, in the previous century, none at all. Pauper patients were simply treated as prisoners by order of the magistrates.

Although the work of Conolly and Tuke did so much to restrain the abusive practices to the insane, and proved that many of the unfortunate were not quite so dangerous as had been thought, much still remained to be done in stamping out neglect and brutality. Dr. Conolly of Hanwell Asylum pressed for the abolition of mechanical restraint such as the strait-jacket and irons. He also averred that the pleasures which arise from imparting trifling satisfactions to impaired minds helped much in the task of bringing about the cure or alleviation of mental ills.

Although his views were not original it was due to his earnestness that the revolution in asylum management in England took place.

The condition in registered hospitals and better class asylums had greatly improved of recent years, but there was still no adequate accommodation for the pauper insane. It was not until 1815, when Tuke gave evidence before the Committee of Enquiry on Lunatic Asylums at the House of Commons that a Bill was subsequently passed regulating the treatment of the insane and establishing 15 Commissioners in Lunacy with extensive powers.

Lord Shaftesbury acted as chairman of this Lunacy Commission from 1828 until his death, a period of 57 years. As a result of the report of a parliamentary committee, Lord Shaftesbury brought in a Bill establishing the Board of Lunacy Commissioners with the duty of inspecting regularly the asylums in England and Wales and demanding better treatment of lunatics. This Bill of 1845 has been called the Magna Charta of the liberties of the insane.

The royal commission recommended the removal of the "stigma of pauperisation" by divorcing lunacy law and administration from the poor-law. Its objects, entirely in the interest and care of the insane, were to provide a place most suitable for them, to nurse them back to health or, if incurable, to alleviate their suffering as far as possible.

In 1846 the first idiot asylum or training establishment was built. Under the provision of Lord Shaftesbury's new Bill, asylums for the insane were erected in every English county, while a Board of Commissioners was appointed to inspect and report on every asylum and determine that every insane person, whether in or out of an institution, was well treated. In 1854, the Commissioners of Lunacy also ascertained the opinion of those entrusted with the care of the insane regarding the duration of isolation of patients. Isolation was generally considered beneficial, if used for short intervals, not only for the patients concerned but, in the case of maniacal subjects, for the quiet and comfort of others.

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