

## History of Mental Nursing.

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IT IS DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE that only of recent years has a mental nurse received a scientific training in mental nursing, as it was previously considered hardly an occupation for a respectable young woman.

Those that were employed often had to be dismissed for drunkenness and other misdemeanours.

It was necessary that the nurse should be able to read and write, but many were engaged without references, as no really respectable person would undertake such disagreeable work.

But as more improvements took place for the care of the insane, a better class of nurse was employed, till at the present time, owing to the extraordinary amount of time, patience and skill required for the progressive treatment now being used, the mental nursing profession has also further improved.

Looking back through the ages we find that the nursing sisters of the churches of various orders first tended the sick in mind. The influence of the nuns on medicine, nursing and hospital administration is well known; (they probably existed before monks, and in the dark ages their convents were havens for the sick); but of actual mental nursing very little is known.

The famous order of the Holy Ghost was a foundation of women in 1145, who were concerned with the care of the sick, staffing many mediaeval hospitals and probably even training probationers.

The Hospitaller Sisters of the Mercy of Jesus, an order founded about the same time, also cared for the sick, visited leper houses and had custody of the insane.

The monks took a great part in the study of medicine and botany, and as previously mentioned, cared for the insane. Because of the belief that the insane were possessed of the devil, exorcism and visits to holy wells were practised by the church as a form of treatment.

The first asylum for the insane was the work of a Spanish monk named Juan Gilberto Joffre at Valencia in 1409 and, from the 16th century onwards the Brothers of Charity cared chiefly for the insane, notably at the Charenton Hospital in France.

After the monks came Keepers, who were often armed with whips for the chastisement of the insane, which was part of the treatment prescribed for them. These Keepers could handcuff and fetter the inmates of asylums as they willed.

With the passing of Keepers came the attendants, who were looked upon as a kind of prison warder; but it is doubtful if there were any women attendants until the 18th century. As male and female patients were not separated in the asylums, it is probable that only male attendants cared for them. But in time, more attention was given to the insane; female watchers, or attendants, were employed, though intellect was not expected of them and their knowledge of anatomy and disease was of the crudest.

Miss Nightingale, in 1860, first awakened the public mind to the need that existed for general trained nurses, and started in London (in connection with St. Thomas's Hospital) the Nightingale Fund training school for nursing. Miss Nightingale founded and promoted nursing associations and wrote important treatises and books on hospital administration and the practice of

nursing. She was consulted by every one engaged in works of charity.

Her travels took her to Egypt, where she received help and information from members of the Order of St. Vincent de Paul, but her chief great work was in 1854, when she was entrusted with the care and administration of nursing the allied armies in the Crimea, and reduced the hospital death rate from 50 per cent. to 2 per cent. in that same part of the world in which the nuns nursed and cared for the sick 500 years before.

The nursing of the insane may be regarded as a special development arising from sick nursing, as it was not until 1885 that the first edition of "The Handbooks for Attendants on the Insane" was issued by a committee of Scottish members of the Medico-Psychological Association.

It consisted of a thin volume of 64 pages and was prepared in the hope of helping the attendants on the insane to a fuller understanding of the work in which they were employed, but no lectures or sick nursing instruction were given them.

The Medico-Psychological Association was founded in 1841. Dr. Cowles published a paper on Nursing Reform for the nursing of the insane in October, 1887, but little had been done in the way of offering the nurse the opportunities for training which her hospital sister had now enjoyed for some years.

Lectures to attendants had been given in a few of the Scottish and English asylums before 1889, but no examinations were held. Several efforts were made by some leading members of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association (chief among them were Dr. Clouston, Whitcombe and Campbell Clark), but no considerable change was noted.

It was not until 1890 that any record as to the scientific training of mental nurses is to be found, when the Royal Medico-Psychological Association decided that measures should be taken to instruct nurses in their duties towards the patients, and a committee of which Dr. Hayes of Newington was Chairman, reported at the annual meeting held in Glasgow that it was advisable to institute a proper system of training attendants in asylums, to establish examinations to test the proficiency of candidates, and to grant certificates to those who were successful in passing the examinations.

The report was received and approved and the first examination was held in May, 1891.

Nurses, male and female, were required to study and have sufficient knowledge of anatomy, physiology, psychology, mental diseases and general nursing, also a special study of the nursing of the insane, to prepare them to pass the examination, the training to cover a period of not less than three years, and the nurses to attend three courses of twenty lectures each given by the medical staff of the hospital. There were, besides, practical demonstrations and periodical examinations or tests in connection with them. This mental training equipped the nurses for service in mental hospitals only.

A fourth year's training being optional, instruction during that year included in some mental hospitals, massage, invalid cookery and occupational therapy. There are still a great many mental hospitals that the modern outlook has not reached, owing probably to insufficient medical and nursing staff, old-fashioned buildings, and the lack of vision. *(To be concluded.)*

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