

# THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED  
THE NURSING RECORD

ETHEL GORDON FENWICK, S.R.N., HON. EDITOR 1888—1947.

No. 2250. Vol. 104.

FEBRUARY-MARCH, 1956.

Price Sevenpence.

## Editorial.

### The Essence of Good Nursing.

IT IS WELL in adopting any work in life to keep definitely in mind what we should aim at achieving thereby, and every probationer who enters our nurse training schools should be helped to realise the objects of the instruction she will there receive.

Primarily, most girls enter upon a nursing career as a means of self-support, and it is a laudable object. But, when the decision has been taken, the aspirant for training must remember that she has chosen a career which, from some aspects is specially difficult, and requires special qualifications, natural and acquired. She will not have to deal with inanimate material which can be moulded at will, but with human beings, whose co-operation with her efforts for their welfare she must endeavour to secure, if the best results are to be obtained. She should therefore take every possible opportunity of studying human nature, for in the course of her work she will meet with humanity at its best and at its worst, and if she is to deal successfully with both, and with the large mass of people who come into neither of those categories, she must be a student and a lover of the human race, realising that it finds self-expression in a variety of forms, that "it takes all sorts to make a world," and that her sympathies should be wide enough to include them all. A real reverence for their humanity, whatever its outward manifestation, will be the greatest lever in her possession for raising it to a higher level in those instances where self-respect has been wounded, and she will be wise to adopt the poet's counsel:—

Then gently scan your brother man,  
Still gentler sister woman;  
Though they may gang a kennin wrang,  
To step aside is human.  
One point must still be greatly dark,  
The moving why they do it!  
And just as lamely can ye mark  
How far, perhaps, they rue it.

So much for the general outlook of the nurse upon the human material. Her special attitude should be a passion for health as the birthright of every human being, and consequently, her fixed aim will be to aid in the prevention and cure of disease, in the relief of suffering, and the consolation of the sick and the dying.

In order that she may achieve these ends, she will set herself steadfastly to acquire knowledge, for the help that she will eventually bring to her patients will not be merely that of a person of good will, but of a trained and competent expert. That is what the public pay for, and have a right to expect. Ignorance in the untrained

is to be expected, in the trained it is unpardonable and dangerous. And with knowledge as a basis she will spare no pains to acquire professional skill, including the gentle touch, deft manipulation, alertness in the observation of symptoms, sureness and swiftness in dealing with critical situations and emergencies, so that her confidence is infectious, and the patient is comforted and tranquillized. Consider this as an asset in successfully dealing with a sudden case of hæmorrhage, and many similar instances could be given.

To conclude: the essence of good nursing is to surround the patient with an atmosphere of comfort and tranquillity, and with competent care based on knowledge. No pains are too great to acquire dexterity in manipulation and in the art of healing both mind and body.

### Advice Given in These Pages Fifty Years Ago.

THERE ARE many good qualities which go to the making of a good nurse. Do we not all know them? Practical efficiency, tact, trustworthiness, good temper, discretion—all are admittedly indispensable. But another quality is not so often emphasised as necessary to the trained nurse, and that is keenness. Yet from the first day that a probationer enters hospital it is both to herself and others most invaluable, for it makes all the difference between indifference and good work, the difference between that of one who merely gives value for money paid down and that of the artist who is never content to put less than his best into whatever he takes in hand. It is this pride of craft which carries a nurse over many hard places and wearisome days, which lightens the monotony of routine, and puts drudgery into its right place as a necessary part of the whole great scheme which is concentrated on the healing of the sick.

All through her training this point of view stands a nurse in good stead, and later if she decides to remain in hospital life there are many outlets for keenness. Exquisitely kept wards, and well cared for patients by no means exhaust them. As a trainer of others, nursing education, and the wider professional interests afford scope for her energies.

In nursing amongst the poor the amount of good she can do is incalculable if once she interests herself in the general welfare of those living in the district which she serves. It is indeed this keenness for the maintenance of a high standard of health which will reveal to the district nurse the endless possibilities of her work. There may not be a large percentage of the acute cases to which she has been accustomed in hospital, and a nurse with a narrow outlook may be inclined to say that there is "nothing to do." But if once she realises that her work has not changed in interest but in character, she will not have to complain of lack of employment.

The daily inculcation of the laws of health may not be as exciting as a big operation, yet, what could be better work for the community than to prevent the infantile ophthalmia which is responsible for so large a percentage of blindness in adults, or to save members of a phthisical family from infection by one stricken with the disease, by teaching the precautions necessary to be observed in such cases?

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)