

## Elementary Anatomy,

AS APPLIED TO NURSING.

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### LECTURE I.—INTRODUCTORY.

HERE is now-a-days no need, as there was some fifteen years ago when the following Lectures were first delivered by the author, to explain why Nurses should be acquainted with, at least, the elements of Anatomy and Physiology, in order the better to understand, and the more rationally to assist, cases of injury or disease. Since then, courses of Lectures on these subjects have become the established rule at all important Hospitals; and Hygiene, Nursing, and Ambulance instruction is imparted in hundreds of villages at the expense of their respective County Councils. The rapid progress of this technical education, in so short a period, would seem to show that the diffusion of knowledge of these subjects will, year by year, become greater and more wide, and that it especially behoves Nurses to make themselves well acquainted with sciences which have so direct and so important a bearing upon their daily work. There is no question of converting them into doctors, and no possibility that they can devote the eighteen months to theoretical study and practical dissections and demonstrations upon these subjects which are required from medical students. But a correct, if limited, understanding of the marvellous mechanism of the human frame is essential to the Nurse who desires to appreciate the condition of her patient, and the special points to which her observation is to be directed. It is to be hoped that, in the near future, Elementary Anatomy and Physiology will be more generally taught in girls' schools, and that Nurses will have acquired that knowledge, and have passed a preliminary examination in these subjects, before they enter a Nurse-Training School as Probationers. They would then be able, at once, to comprehend more readily the details of practical Nursing, and would obtain more immediate benefit from the clinical instruction which they receive during their first year of work.

The following course of Lectures, then, will be as practical as possible, explaining in a simple manner the anatomical constitution of the human body, and showing how each structure is affected by disease or accident; how Nature provides for the repair of injured tissues, and, therefore, what reasons underlie the treatment which is adopted in each particular instance. The fundamental rule to be remembered is that "*Nature attempts to remedy*

*every disease.*" Sometimes, as we shall see, she succeeds admirably—sometimes she fails altogether—but, in every case, she makes the attempt, and it is upon the "healing power of Nature," as the ancients wisely termed it, that medical men now chiefly rely. All the efforts of medical science are bent upon the discovery of the precise methods by which Nature tries to cure the various diseases to which flesh is heir. When these methods are discovered, every effort of practical medicine is directed, simply and solely, towards assisting Nature's work.

Now, when the natural processes of repair are carefully considered, two facts stand out pre-eminently, and may, with much advantage, be remembered as a sort of golden rule. "*The first principles in the cure of disease or injury, are CLEANLINESS AND REST.*" As we proceed, we shall see these exemplified in every case; but in these introductory remarks, it is sufficient to reflect, for a moment, how true would be the converse statement, and how many diseases are now known to be due to Dirt, while some few are rightly attributed to Overwork. It would be possible to go further in the assertion of this dogma, and to say that, so far as Surgery and Obstetrics are concerned, the first essential is Cleanliness; and in Medical cases, that Rest is the first desideratum. And Cleanliness may justly be held to be the active duty of the Nurse, while Rest is more a passive part to be played by the patient. It would, consequently, follow that the former is the chief part of good Nursing, and no excuse need be made for emphasizing this fact. Great and deserved credit is ascribed to the introduction of antiseptics into surgical practice; but it is now generally admitted that the value of their use has been much exaggerated, and that it is to the greater care and cleanliness which was thus induced, rather than to the poisonous effect of carbolic acid upon putrefactive germs, that the splendid surgical successes, which have since been achieved, are really due. This is proved by the fact that some operators, who are rigorously particular in the sanitary surroundings of their patients, but trust to soap and water rather than to germicides, obtain results even better than fall to others who still pin their faith upon the exclusion of bacteria by the creation of a poisonous atmosphere in which they cannot live. Antiseptics, however, are valuable when the results of Dirt have to be treated, and where existent bacteria have to be slaughtered by the million. But it should be remembered that just as Prevention is immensely better than Cure, so the maintenance of absolute cleanliness, so far as the patient and his surroundings are concerned, is much to be preferred to the routine employment of antiseptic sprays or lotions.

*(To be continued.)*

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