

she is withdrawn when the crisis is over, and sent elsewhere for another crisis equally as acute; when she is taken from Nursing an ovarian case single-handed for weeks, she is, for *change* and *light work*, sent to a household of fretful children with the measles, after which she is passed to a mental case. Is it surprising that a Nurse's health breaks down? Would she not be more than human if she did not suffer?

In times of epidemic, such as the influenza panic, Nurses (worthy of the name) work hard and constantly until they also drop, stricken by the same fiend; but it is not that which I am trying to bring before you so much as the trials *forced* upon them—trials unfitted to their strength. This brings me to the last evil I shall mention, and if what I have said makes Nurses and those who employ them *pause* before risking their health, then my experience will not have been wasted.

I want very earnestly to point out the wearing duties imposed on Nurses employed in mental cases, and to ask you to consider whether it is *right* that women of bright intelligence, and the power to lead useful lives should be allowed to exhaust their nerve-power on beings whose senses are so distraught that never, in this world, will they become anything but strangers to their kind. The nervous system is connected in so marvellous a manner with the rest of our organisation that I argue it is more injurious to us to exert the control necessary for the entire and successful subjection of the insane than for any other kind of nursing. I am not speaking of the physical force necessary to control a raving maniac, but of the excess of mesmeric power needed for the management of patients suffering from hysteria and especially religious mania.

It is an indisputable fact that women have greater power over the minds of lunatics of the opposite sex (and *vice versa*, for women suffering from mental diseases are often amenable to the doctor when the Nurse is useless), but the influence which they exercise is extremely exhausting to themselves. I do not, for a moment, advocate that the care of mental cases should be always deputed to men, for that would be a confession of weakness which is not my point at all; but is it not a worthy consideration sometimes, whether, if *one* must be sacrificed, the Nurse's welfare is not of more value than that of the imbecile patient's? for how seldom in these cases is anything *like* a permanent cure effected or expected. When, however, the patient, or patient's friends are *rich*, every alleviation which high-class Nurses can give is eagerly sought for, whilst little or no consideration is given to the dangerous re-action on the nervous system of the Nurses themselves.

We know that just as all men are not suited for the same work, so all women are not suited for Nurses, and *still* fewer are suited for these mental cases. Generally speaking, it is the Nurse, who, from a higher education, has learned to use her brains (who, therefore, is of greater value in other branches of Nursing), who is most affected by the strain put upon her, so that doctors employing Nurses in mental cases might often save to our profession valuable lives while not in the least depriving themselves or their patients of assistance equally efficacious from Nurses who, being of stronger physique, have also nerve-power of tougher quality.

And the Nurse can do much, for when she finds that her mind becomes engrossed by the hallucinations of

her patient, and that the struggle to keep the mastery is telling on her general health, then I say she has no right to sacrifice herself to the bare possibility of influencing for good the distorted mind of her patient.

In conclusion, it is only fair to state that the force of these opinions did not strike me when I was working myself—when I went from case to case without discrimination; but, looking back, I see the mistakes I made, and it is with a true interest in Nurses that I have put together these remarks. I have wished to point out also the tendency there is to overstrain the health when striving for proficiency in what is surely the most womanly of all occupations.

In Manchester, where I now live, there are many Nurses, but as yet no centre where they may meet to discuss questions of moment to all; but I hope that want may yet be supplied, and that in the near future someone from London will come to expose evils under which Nurses break down, and that Manchester Nurses will receive her efforts as well as you have received mine. I thank you for your attention, and shall be glad in my turn to hear a discussion on *all* the points I have mentioned.

DISCUSSION.

Dr. GAGE BROWN, commenting upon the various points raised by Mrs. Hughes, considered that heavy and laborious ward work was unnecessary for the training of a Nurse. There were times, of course, when self-sacrifice on the part of the Nurse practically saved the life of her patient, but such self-sacrifice was not called for every day; and as a Nurse should, without doubt, possess robust health, she must have sufficient rest, food, and fresh air to maintain her strength.

Mrs. BEDFORD FENWICK premised her remarks with the statement that Nurses themselves were responsible for the abuses with which their profession abounded. If Nurses possessed a sterner sense of justice, more moral courage, and a greater love of truth, and exercised these virtues, they would not have to complain of many hardships from which they undoubtedly suffered. Speaking personally, she had never been placed professionally in an anomalous position, because she had always refused to accept and work under unjust regulations. With regard to sleep, food, and fresh air, the laws of nature must be obeyed, and a Nurse who attempted to contravene these laws must inevitably pay the penalty of nerve exhaustion. The surgeon who directed that his patients should be nursed by one nurse night and day, outraged the laws of nature—and, in consequence, of science—and either murdered his Nurse physically or morally. Mrs. FENWICK remarked, cleanliness was the basis of all good Nursing. Personally, she enjoyed scrubbing and polishing, and believed such exercise in moderation was conducive to a Nurse's health, and no more exhausting than tennis or golf. She thought that the generality of Private Hospitals were greatly in need of reform; and, as she was writing a paper on the subject, would have great pleasure in making her views public in the near future.

Mrs. SPENCER remarked that her experience of Nursing had neither been so varied or unpleasant as that of Mrs. Hughes; but, during a late visit to Manchester, she had made inquiries into Nursing matters, and regretted much to hear that, owing to competition, many Private Nurses were accepting a fee of 15s. a week. It was hoped that, in the near future, deputations from the Royal British Nurses' Association would visit the important local centres, and thus arouse an interest in Nursing from a professional point of view.

Notes of thanks were then unanimously passed to the Lecturer and Chairman.

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