

the value of this training to them throughout the whole of their nursing career.

THE IMPORTANCE OF NIGHT NURSING.

DR. HERBERT COLLIER, the Medical Officer of the Infirmary under the Yarmouth Board of Guardians, has recently expressed to the Board his dissatisfaction with the night nursing of the infirmary, and submitted to the Board the consideration that "it is even more important to obtain experienced and reliable persons for this branch of service than for the ordinary day work of the sick wards."

We think that all superintendents of nurses will endorse this view. If, as one of the members of the Board pointed out, they at present "engage all the high-class talent for day duty, and leave the patients to the tender mercies of just anybody during the night," some alteration in the arrangements is surely required. The duties of a night nurse are most responsible, and the temptation to slackness is undoubtedly much greater than to her colleagues on day duty. The lack of supervision, and the unnatural conditions necessitated, by working in the night and sleeping in the day, are both conducive of slackness. There is, further, temptation to nurses who are usually wide awake when their bed time comes, to spend as little time as possible in bed, and to go out and amuse themselves, with the consequence that they are inert, sleepy, and unfit for duty at night. The most conscientious of night nurses know, and dread, the terrible sleepiness which sometimes assails them between two and four in the morning, a condition with which it requires all their strength of mind to struggle. Then, again, the stimulus of competition is missing, the night nurse being usually on duty alone, and further, the superficial smartness which, we are afraid, is characteristic of many of the present day nurses, does not go to make a good night nurse. Her duties for the most part consist in doing the one hundred and one small things which no one will be any the wiser if she leaves undone, but which make all the difference in the comfort of her patients. A night nurse, most especially, needs to possess the qualities of "patience, and abnegation of self, and devotion to others," which were characteristic of Longfellow's ideal nurse, and which can only be attained by the cultivation of the spirit of self sacrifice and of a strong sense of duty. These

virtues are, we are afraid, not so frequently desired by the modern nurse as more showy and superficial ones. If, however, it is felt that, even amongst trained nurses, it is the most conscientious who are needed for responsible positions on night duty, the fate of the patients who are left to "just anybody" will be obvious, and in any institution where this plan is adopted it calls for immediate remedy.

The Nursing of Maternity Cases.

By MARGARET BREAY,

Late Superintendent St. John's Maternity Home.

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PROLONGED LABOUR—(Continued.)

PROLONGED labour may also be caused by *spina bifida* (a cleft spine), on the part of the child. In cases of *spina bifida* there is a malformation of the vertebral canal, with the protrusion of some of its contents in the form of a fluid tumour. It will be understood, therefore, that if this tumour attains large dimensions, it may seriously retard the labour. The presence of *spina bifida* is due to the arrest of the development of the laminae of the vertebrae. The sac of the tumour is formed of the dura mater and arachnoid membranes. The contents of the sac may be cerebro-spinal fluid only, or it may also contain a portion of the spinal cord and nerves, or, rarely, the cord itself may be distended with fluid and attached to the sac wall. It will be impossible to decide before the birth of the child that *spina bifida* is the cause of the delay, but in any case of unduly prolonged labour medical assistance must be procured. Should a child be born with a *spina bifida*, a medical practitioner not being present, the child must at once be put under medical treatment. The most important thing for the nurse to remember, is that the child must never be placed in any position where there will be pressure on the tumour, as this may cause immediate death.

PELVIC DEFORMITIES.

One of the most common causes, both of prolonged labour, and of abnormal presentations, is pelvic deformity on the part of the mother. This may be readily understood. For instance, the normal internal conjugate diameter of the brim of the

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