

Our Foreign Letter.

BY HOLLANDIA.

ON the 1st of September, Dr. J. Kuiper, Medical Superintendent of the Wilhelmina Hospital, at Amsterdam, gave a lecture on "Sick Nursing" in the Congress Hall of the National Exhibition of Women's Work, at the Hague. The chief points of his discourse are strongly summed up in the following conclusions:—

1. Women are, in general, more fit for the task of sick nursing than men.
2. There are still many young women wanted for the nursing of the patients in our hospitals, our lunatic asylums, and for district nursing, as well in our country itself as in its colonies.
3. A nurse must be first of all a woman of character.
4. The nursing service in our hospitals, our lunatic asylums, and in district nursing, ought to be regulated in such a way, that the health of the nurses is not injured by it.
5. In a well-ordered hospital the probationer finds an excellent training school for the further development of her character and intellect.
6. Some years of hospital work give to the nurse knowledge, skill, and an experience, which will prove to be of great use, as well to herself as to her surroundings, in all circumstances.

In his introductory remarks the speaker alluded to two screens, that had greatly attracted his attention, when visiting the Exhibition of Women's Work. On the first screen he saw represented a woman's life, trifled away with lawn tennis, bicycling, dancing, the reading of novels, etc. On the second screen, excellently depicted by a most simple, yet very tasteful arrangement, were shown a great number of trades, in which the physical and moral strength of women are wanted.

"I cannot believe," Dr. Kuiper went on, "that it is owing to a casual circumstance, that sick nursing has been named first of all on the latter screen, and as neither the number of the active powers required can have influenced the classing of the different professions, I may hail it as a happy fact, that women themselves consider the nursing of their suffering fellow creatures as a trade, for which they are most especially fit.

It may be, that the makers of this screen have been ruled, when composing it, by the supposition, that there is still a great want for nurses. On account of my personal experience, I confirm the soundness of this belief.

Several hospitals and lunatic asylums are, as yet, not what they ought to be, simply because the number of efficient nurses, with aspirations, is not large enough. In our dear country district-nursing is only in the initial stage, and as the great use of nursing to some patients in their own homes is more generally felt, the want of trained nurses will greatly increase. Before giving herself to district-nursing, and being thrown upon her own responsibility, a nurse must have followed the course of a well-ruled hospital-school. The conviction that only trained persons are to be charged with the task of sick nursing, is more and more prevailing in our country, and also in the Dutch colonies. This year, three certificated nurses of the Wilhelmina Hospital started for the Isle of Java, and one for Suriname. The Minister for the Colonial Department has already issued a summons for mental nurses, on behalf of the lunatic asylums at Buitenzorg (near Batavia, Java). The demand for nurses in our colonies will surely much increase.

What is the reason of our preferring—in general—female to male nurses, and which women are most of all fit for the nursing work?

My personal experience, obtained in the position of army-surgeon and afterwards as medical superintendent of a hospital, has taught me, that, on the whole, women are more fit for sick-nursing than men. It would be wrong to ascribe this altogether to the natural aptness of women for soothing pain and giving aid and comfort. I am sure, that there are many men, who would prove to possess an innate genius for nursing—I have only to point out the fact, that there are very good male nurses as well in the army, as in hospitals and lunatic asylums—if the nursing work was paid sufficiently to enable them to provide for wife and children. In the present state of affairs the number of suitable aspirant male nurses is but small. There are not many men who feel inclined to keep to celibacy for their whole life, or at least longer than the greater part of their fellow-men. Therefore we are fully justified to call it a happy fact, that women, destined by nature for the nursing of women and children, undertake the task, in which man is failing, by devoting themselves also to the care of male patients. The great number of probationers, dismissed as unfit for the nursing-work, proves clearly, that not *all* women are endowed with those qualities, so urgently necessary for this noble profession. Someone has said: I don't remember his or her name—that a nurse is not only busy with her hands, but also with her heart and mind. This is an undeniable truth. We expect in a nurse a clear intellect, sharpened by experience and exercise; a heart full of kind and warm sympathy for her fellow creatures; a firm, steady and yet tender hand.

These general demands being stipulated, I shall try to answer the question, what kind of women are fit to receive a training as nurses?

The aspirant nurse ought to be not too young and not too old. I should like to put these limits from 20 to 35 years. Good health is also an urgent demand. It is quite unnecessary to expatiate on this subject. The medical superintendent of the hospital, to whom she applies, is competent to judge in this point.

Bodily weakness is not always a sound reason to dissuade a young woman from devoting herself to nursing work. It often seems to the lay-world a most surprising fact, not to say a hazardous undertaking, that a young woman, apparently of feeble health, is admitted as probationer, and the surprise is increased, when the pupil nurse after six months' or a year's training has overcome her former weakness, as is clearly proved by her blooming cheeks.

So much as to the bodily state of the aspirant nurse. We shall now fix our attention on the demands of heart and mind.

A nurse must be a woman of character; she must take life as an earnest thing, not to be trifled away; she must be inspired by a noble enthusiasm for the work she has chosen; she must have a strong feeling of duty and a large amount of self-respect, revealing itself in a firm dislike of all that is impure and ignoble. She must beware of misplaced sympathies and inclinations. Cheerfulness, kindness and softness, not excluding, however, firmness and steadiness in feeling and acting, these are the qualities which a nurse must possess; if not, she must try to acquire them. First of all the aspirant nurse must be a woman of character. Good breeding and good manners warrant a pleasant intercourse, and the more she has developed her

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