

The Nursing Conference Questions.

THE NEED OF SANITARY KNOW- LEDGE FOR NURSES.

BY MISS ALICE WADMORE.

It has been recognised that the study of the laws of sanitation is a matter of far reaching importance to the general community, because it is essential to the moral and physical welfare of the people.

One of the greatest levers for spreading a knowledge of sanitation over the whole world is co-operation by women. Acts of Parliament may enforce all kinds of sanitary regulations, but till each woman becomes her own health officer in her own home, and there ordains sanitary conditions to be carried out, legislative rule will and can do very little for the good work of preventive sanitation.

One of the best ways to spread sanitary knowledge is to educate, and this knowledge should not only be taught in our elementary schools, but in every high school and college frequented by girls and women. For, if people were taught the causes of preventive diseases and death, that disease is only the outcome of man's offence against natural laws, preventive sanitation would, indeed, have made rapid strides!

Sanitary progress depends on two points: (1.) The administration of sanitary law by the sanitary authorities. (2.) There must be co-operation from the people in fulfilling the law. And only sanitary education can produce this. But to all classes can this be given. Especially valuable is such knowledge to the woman who heads a house, or who lives in one room, to the district visitor, parson, and to the nurse.

There is hardly any calling in life so valuable as that of a nurse—because she is a practical teacher, and therefore a very valuable factor in the spreading of sanitary knowledge. Nurses who are educated in sanitary matters, and who work among the crowds of poor, and the terribly neglected children, can do noble work by pure example. In fact, to a district nurse working in a "poor centre," is given the opportunity of moulding the minds of thousands in daily sanitary matters. To her is offered the chance of developing sanitary knowledge in many homes and in influencing the methods of the next generation. She can show that the neglect of sanitary duties injures other people, and that unselfishness can be taught by even a drain pipe or properly kept kitchen sink. She can show that the evils resulting from ill-cooked food, the ignorant breakings of the laws of health which go on in our rich nurseries, besides among our poorer classes, the needless high rate

of infant mortality, the evils of overcrowding, the value of good water and fresh air!

We all know that such ignorance causes the low physical condition of the lower classes, and we must equally recognise that such a state of affairs cannot be straightened till the poor themselves understand the simple laws of health and learn to co-operate in our efforts on their behalf.

On the other hand, a nurse working among the upper classes has full scope for her powers of teaching sanitation in all directions, especially in the treatment of babies and the management of the nursery, generally placed under the care and direction of a well intentioned so-called nurse, who is woefully ignorant of all sanitary affairs.

So to a nurse who grasps the full scope of woman's influence in sanitary work, a knowledge of practical sanitary science is essential. After gaining such knowledge, the first result of her sanitary work is the application of such knowledge to herself. This may seem hardly worth mentioning, but it's a truth. Many labouring to better the sanitary surroundings of their neighbours do not recognise its necessity as far as they themselves are concerned. Next, a nurse will be ready to begin her work for the sanitary and physical elevation of others.

Now where is the nurse to learn sanitation? Her time as a probationer, and later on as a fully trained nurse is completely taken up by her round of duties. Sick cookery has recently been added to the lists of a nurse's training, whether she is being trained in a hospital or private institute. Sanitation ought to be taught at the same centres. Surely if scientific cookery, a selection of diet and knowledge of the chemistry of foods, are admitted as valuable aids to the training of a nurse, an acquaintance with sanitation, which will prevent disease and death, and which gives a full knowledge of household sanitary law, is equally worth consideration. Men may work, authority make law, but while women, especially nurses, remain ignorant of such wise knowledge, half the results of sanitary work are useless. The time has come when women, and nurses in particular, should take their share in applying and developing sanitation that deals with the hundred-and-one facts of daily life. Sanitation covers large grounds; the points therefore are many that present themselves. I will mention two of value in a nurse's training:

- 1.—Drainage of a house.
- 2.—Infection and disinfection.

"Good drainage is the basis of domestic sanitation." Of course, drain evils in a house can and do come from bad material, wrong fall of pipes, so that there is an insufficient flow into the sewer, or the trappings may be insecure, or a stoppage or leakage occur, so that poisonous drain gases render all management useless. On the other hand, good

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)