

### Tropical Nursing.

MUCH is heard at the present time of the nursing of tropical diseases, and many nurses now proceed to tropical climates in the discharge of their duties, but few have any idea of the conditions under which they will live or the precautions necessary to be observed if they wish to maintain their health.

First of all we would impress upon all nurses who are proceeding to an unhealthy climate the wisdom of obtaining a medical opinion as to their fitness for work in the tropics, if this is not required by the authority which is sending them out. For instance, most medical men would disqualify nurses who have any hereditary tendency to insanity or other forms of cerebral disease, any cardiac weakness, such as is likely to be the sequela of acute rheumatism, any kidney mischief, which has, perhaps, supervened upon an attack of scarlet fever. Indigestion is also a contra-indication for tropical service. All the organs, in short, should be in sound condition, and it is important that this should be ascertained before proceeding abroad. In this country any weakness may for a long time remain quiescent, but under the more strenuous conditions inseparable from life in the tropics, it, as a rule, speedily declares itself, the result being probably a speedy return home, with health seriously impaired, perhaps permanently, or even death abroad.

Secondly, medical consent having been obtained, it is wise to take a real rest, if possible. Nurses usually work at high pressure, and, as a consequence, are more or less "run down," but it is imperative, if they wish for a good record, that they should begin their tropical work in the best condition of health, and, therefore, if the exigencies of the case permit, it is wise to take a rest of some weeks, or even months, before undertaking the new work.

Then, on arrival, many English nurses make the mistake of thinking that they can work in exactly the same manner as they do at home, and do not see the necessity of accommodating themselves to the climate. First of all, nurses, as well as the laity, with whom, perhaps, it is even more common, fall into the pernicious habit of drugging themselves on the smallest provocation. Sulphate of quinine, with no regard to the dose, is taken promiscuously by the handful, and aperients are constantly resorted to, with evil results. Sometimes, of course, it may be necessary when medical advice is unobtainable, to dose oneself, but, as an all-round rule, drugs should be strictly avoided except under medical direction, and experience of the tropics leads to the supposition that, in the aggregate, much

less harm would be done if all the cases of drugs supplied to those other than medical practitioners were consigned to the depths of the sea, than by the lack of them on occasions when their contents might be of use. Regular exercise, a necessity in the tropics, a judicious diet, including a liberal supply of fruit, will do much to keep a person in health, and to obviate the necessity for resorting to the use of drugs. Furthermore, stimulants, if taken at all, should be used with caution, and never between meals, and narcotics absolutely avoided. Next, "English energy" must be kept well in check, remembering that the supply must be husbanded so as to last over several years, and it is apt to fail lamentably long before that time. It is wisdom to adopt the custom of the country, and to take a siesta of one or two hours, if the exigencies of work permit—and, by judicious management, it can generally be arranged—in the middle of the day. It is easy, at first, to scorn the necessity for the adoption of this habit, and to go on working all through the day. It is certainly a temptation when there is much that one wishes to do. But except when the sick would suffer—and their well-being must, of course, be put before all other considerations—there are few things which it would not be better to defer doing in order to ensure the mid-day rest.

Newcomers to the tropics are apt to under-rate the evil effects of the sun, and a word on this point is necessary. It is wearisome, no doubt, always to take precautions. It is difficult to believe that it is dangerous to cross a courtyard of only twelve yards in width without putting up an umbrella, between the hours of nine and four, or even five o'clock, and that one should invariably wear a sun hat if obliged to go out between these hours. But the neglect of these precautions is likely to result in an attack of sun fever, if nothing worse, and the consequence of this carelessness is not only to incapacitate and inconvenience oneself, but, in addition to the trouble entailed by one's illness, to throw the burden of one's work upon those who already have as much as they can accomplish, and to whom extra work may mean a break down. An attack of malaria is frequently unavoidable, but to be incapacitated by sun fever should be regarded by every nurse as a reproach.

Lastly, it is well to remember that native help should be utilized as much as possible. It is often tiresome to exercise the necessary supervision, and far easier to do the work oneself; but the ultimate result of patient teaching is to produce an efficient corps of assistants—a real gain to oneself, and a valuable contribution to the education of those whom, in our insular pride, we are accustomed to call "the inferior races."

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