

## Lectures on the Nursing of Lung Diseases.

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### CHAPTER V.

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In the few cases in which all drugs fail, the trouble can be materially lessened by persuading the patient to drink no liquids for some hours before going to sleep, and by the simple precaution to avoid over-heating the body, to which attention has already been directed.

Sufficient has probably been said to impress upon the reader the great need of attention to comparatively small details in the nursing of patients suffering from Phthisis. For example, it is obvious that if the night-sweats can be restrained, and the patient can therefore be afforded an undisturbed and restful night, he will be better able the following day to withstand the exhaustion produced by his cough and expectoration; and will also be more capable of taking nourishment—which will tend not only to repair his loss of tissue, but to build up his strength to resist the further progress of his disease. Too much stress can hardly be laid upon this point, because the treatment of Phthisis is an up-hill fight at the best, and every ounce of strength that can be saved to the patient by careful nursing, will mean twice as much power gained in the contest.

It is, finally, a good general rule for the nurse to remember that next to the free supply of pure air—which is essential for patients suffering from Consumption—the condition of the digestive system is perhaps almost the most important feature. It is almost possible to dogmatise upon the subject, and to say that a patient who is not able to digest his food well, has no possible chance of recovering from Consumption. On the other hand, it is almost equally true to say that so long as the digestive powers remain unimpaired, there is a chance of his recovery.

The final words, therefore, of these Lectures may fairly be devoted to impressing upon the reader the cardinal importance of tempting the patient's appetite not only by varieties of nourishing food, but by the service of these in the most appetising manner; and, on the other hand, that an equally careful regard must be

given to any condition which appears to be disturbing the patient's digestion. For example, the immense benefit of Cod Liver Oil, in the treatment of these patients, has been shown. But, at the same time, there are nurses who, not understanding the importance of the matter, persist in persuading their patients to swallow the prescribed quantity of the Oil, merely on rule of thumb principles, and although the distaste which their patients exhibit towards the medicine increases perhaps day by day, so that, in consequence of such distaste, there is first of all a constant taste of the oil "repeated," then more or less nausea after each dose, and thus an increasing distaste for all food. These are facts which the observant nurse should of course note and report to the Doctor, but which are unfortunately too often overlooked. The patient, perhaps, is willing—doubtless to please the nurse—to dutifully swallow the oil, and makes no complaint of his increasing dislike to ordinary food; while the nurse, satisfied with the performance of the directions given to her, may quite fail to observe that less nourishment is being taken. Thus, it is, perhaps, only when the patient is weighed and a steady loss of weight is discovered, that it is ascertained that the oil is doing more harm than good. Other substitutes for Cod Liver Oil have been described, but whether they are taken or not, the first essential for the patient is that he should be able to take and digest his ordinary food. No amount of artificial nourishment or medicine will compensate for the loss of the ordinary dietary; and therefore the rule is imperative that the nurse should most carefully watch the digestion of the patient and report accurately to the Doctor, who will, in the events described, either modify his treatment or prescribe the necessary remedies to effect the desired end—that is to say, the improvement in the patient's nutrition.

In closing these Lectures, the author is well aware that many other matters, than those touched upon, might have been explained. But his object has been, not to compile a complete and purely scientific description of the nursing required by patients suffering from diseases of the Lungs, but rather to bring before nurses some of the many matters which are overlooked in the ordinary text-books, but attention to which often makes all the difference to the comfort and well-being of the patient, and to the satisfactory performance of the nurses' duties.

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