

**Professional Review.****CONSIDERATIONS SUR LES INFIRMIÈRES  
DES HÔPITEAUX.\***BY ANNA EMILIE HAMILTON,  
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**ARTICLE V.****BRUTALITIES OF MALE NURSES.**

Dr. Hamilton further states that if she speaks constantly of female nurses, it is because she considers that men are unsuited by nature to undertake nursing duties, and that they will certainly disappear from the Paris hospitals, as they have disappeared wherever the efficient care of the sick, whatever their sex may be, is assured. The incapacity of the male sex for the rôle of nurse is also recognised by Dr. Bourneville who advises their gradual elimination from this work.

The roughness of the majority of these male nurses is so well known that the following extract was printed in the principal medical journal:—

"One searches in vain in classical works for a description of signs which permit of the conclusion that a fracture occurring during, or shortly after an attack of convulsions is really spontaneous, and not due to an exterior injury, resulting, for example, *from the ill treatment which the sick person has received from male nurses, or from his fellow patients.*" What a sidelight on the methods employed in dealing with these poor patients!

Another political journal tells, amongst other things, of a male nurse who tied a delirious pneumonia patient to his bed, and put his knee on the unfortunate man's chest while he placed his apron over his head. Half an hour afterwards death had still more surely quieted the poor body. Again, in a lunatic asylum a male nurse administered, on his own initiative, to an excited patient a *douche* so hot that he died from the scalds it occasioned.

**DEFECTIVE HOUSING OF MALE NURSES.**

One of the chief causes which deters suitable persons from entering the nursing career is the accommodation provided for these male nurses. Thanks to Dr. Bourneville, who has always recognised this difficulty in the way of obtaining a better class of men, some hospitals do possess suitable accommodation, but owing to the system of transfer from one hospital to another to which these men are subjected they have no means of attaching themselves to the staffs of hospitals where better conditions prevail.

The Paris *Lancet* gives the following description of one hospital which is a type of others.

"The male nurses are for the most part crowded into a garret where the ceiling is so low that they cannot raise themselves in bed except in the centre of the dormitory. One sees there the little iron bedsteads with bent feet which provide quite inadequate sleeping accommodation. There is no furniture, no parquet, no cupboard, no necessary utensils. The men dress there, and then go down to the wards where they wash in the lavatories provided for the sick, where they also change their personal linen and clothes. There

\* Montpellier. Imprimerie Centrale du Midi. (Hamelin Frères

is no place set apart for them. They are obliged to wash in public and to sleep in a garret where there is nothing for their comfort. These garrets being situated immediately under the roof, those who occupy them are exposed to the extremes of both heat and cold.

"Underneath them are three stories of wards full of sick people, so that while asleep these men are obliged to breathe emanations which rise from the wards and penetrate through the floors and ceiling. It is evidently a serious injury which affects the interests of the general public that these persons are so ill-treated. It is easy to understand that both male and female nurses have a right to be considered. Nothing should be neglected which recognises the dignity and responsibility which they must have professionally. They should, consequently, be treated with respect and not allowed to live in crowded garrets or in dark corners without windows, which are a danger to their health. Such treatment meted out to hospital nurses is a legacy from the past which is unworthy of a civilised city like Paris."

Many more details are given, and the article states that there is more to comment upon than can be said in a day. It, therefore, only draws attention to one more fact, namely, that one of these dormitories is permanently occupied at night by day nurses and in the day time by night nurses.

It then goes on to tell that the female nurses are crowded three in a room which would scarcely comfortably accommodate two. Like the male nurses, they cannot have about them any furniture in which they can place their clothes. They are, therefore, obliged, morning and evening, to go to their wards to dress and undress in the offices. Every one will understand that these compulsory walks are incompatible with discipline, without taking into consideration that they are a cause of fatigue and of danger to the health of the nurses.

It is, says Dr. Hamilton, to nurses placed in such surroundings that lectures are given upon a sepsis, as well as on tuberculosis and the precautions to take against it!

Discipline, rest, cleanliness, sound health, indispensable surroundings for a good nurse, are all hazarded by the accommodation provided for the staff.

It is, indeed, surprising that there can exist in the Paris hospitals, which are scientific centres, these hotbeds of infection to which are certainly due the number of cases of tuberculosis which are found amongst the nursing staff (at the Bichat 21 cases of tuberculosis besides 31 deaths) without mentioning other diseases.

It is known that the mortality exceeds that of most other professions, and it is wrongly attributed to the fact that these persons are constantly near the sick, but this does not occur in countries where the hygienic surroundings of the nursing staff are good, not only as regards their housing, but where the wards are kept clean, well aired, and where contagious diseases are separately treated. M. Rendu declares (we in this country know rightly) that the cases of enteric fever which occur amongst the nursing staff are not to be attributed to contagion, but to contamination due to the way in which the sick are attended to.

It is stated that at the "Pitié," in 1898, out of a staff of 143, 53 men and women, were warded ill, without counting those who, having parents, were cared for at home.

(To be continued.)

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