

Professional Review.

THE NURSING OF CHEST DISEASES.

There are few books written by medical men for nurses which touch much upon points which are of interest and value from a nursing point of view.

More often they are text-books which might with equal propriety be put into the hands of medical students, and which leave the details which are of special nursing interest untouched. In that on the Nursing of Patients suffering from Diseases of the Chest by Dr. Bedford Fenwick, recently published at 11, Adam Street, Strand, special trouble has been taken to describe to nurses how and what to observe in their care of these cases, and those nurses who desire to make their work intelligent should certainly study this book which deals with practical nursing duties in a way which is unique, so far as my observation goes, in a book written by a medical man.

HEART DISEASES.

The book is divided into two parts, (1) the Nursing of Heart Diseases and (2) the Nursing of Throat and Lung Diseases. The first part will be of special value, for the generality of nurses have but a vague idea of the different forms which heart disease may take, and their duties under different circumstances.

"Morbus Cordis" on a patient's headboard covers a wide ground, but many nurses are apt to consider that they need pry no further, that the variations which this disease may assume are of medical and not of nursing importance, and that their sole duty consists in following medical directions and not in trying to understand what is the matter with their patients.

We nurses have however, learnt that our endeavour to carry out medical directions to the letter is keener and more exact, as well as obviously of great value because intelligent, if we understand the dangers which we have to guard against in caring for our patients. Thus when we understand that the restriction of fluid in cases where there is œdema of the tissues of the body is founded on the knowledge that if fluid is denied, the blood-vessels will suck up from the tissues the fluid which they need, and are otherwise unable to obtain, and that the relief of the dropsical condition is consequently the direct result of this treatment, we shall carry it out with much greater zest, though not, let us hope, with greater accuracy, than if we were merely acting on an arbitrary order, and as in this instance so in countless others, the value to the nurse of the comprehension of underlying principles is great. In the introductory chapter of the book now under consideration we are told that in the nursing of cases of Acute Heart Diseases, the first golden rule of nursing is to keep the patient at absolute rest. Rest in bed so that the muscles of the body are as far as possible not used, and thus the work of the heart is lessened, rest of mind so that the nervous system is kept free from worry and excitement.

In Chronic Heart Disease, on the other hand, an essential part of the nursing depends on carefully regulated exercises, and in both acute and chronic diseases of the heart the second great principle in the nursing is the enforcement of a carefully regulated dietary which is often of great, if not of essential importance to the patient's recovery. The first chapter deals with a brief description of the heart itself, and the work which it performs in the healthy state. The next with its diseases, those of the muscle

of the heart, *Hypertrophy* and *Degeneration*, and those of the valves, which for practical purposes are dependent upon an inflammatory condition of the curtains, and which occasion *valvular incompetency* with resulting *regurgitation*. Next there is a chapter on *valvular outgrowths*, the danger of these being the detachment of a fragment or *embolus* by the blood stream and the subsequent plugging of an artery which gives rise to the most serious symptoms. The third consequence of valvular inflammation is that the separate segments of a valve may become glued together by adhesive inflammation causing the condition known as *stenosis*, where there is a "button hole" opening, so that not only is there obstruction to the passage of the blood through the partly closed valvular orifice, but also a certain amount of regurgitation owing to the fixed position of the valves.

Passing on to the nursing of cases of various forms of heart disease, mention must be made of some of the points of special nursing interest.

Speaking of the application of a bella donna plaster, for the relief of the palpitation so common in some forms of heart disease, the author points out that there is no possible advantage to be gained by placing the plaster over the abdomen but many nurses who are directed to apply a plaster over the heart will place only its upper edge over the apex, whereas if the patient is to receive the benefit intended the lower edge of the plaster should be applied on the level of the impulse of the heart, the outer edge being placed inside the nipple to prevent irritation, thus the ordinary small plaster will cover completely the whole area of the chest over the heart.

The explanation of the reason why a glycerine suppository is a valuable agent in cases where much vascular congestion is present is also of interest to nurses. The peculiar property of glycerine is its remarkable affinity for water so that it can suck up from the blood vessels of any part to which it is applied some of their fluid contents. In the case of a rectal application of glycerine the blood vessels pour out a quantity of serum into the rectum which, therefore, acts to all intents and purposes exactly as an ordinary enema would do—distending the bowel, and causing contraction of the muscular wall of the rectum and expulsion of its contents. There is thus a special advantage in the use of glycerine where much vascular congestion is present, as the circulation is thereby relieved.

Note should be made of the suggestion that powders which are refused in any other way are frequently taken when spread on a thin slice of bread, and thickly covered with Devonshire cream.

Note, again, the remarks on the weight or the bed-clothes on a sick person. "It will be time well spent for any nurse to let the picture sink into her memory of a labouring chest wall handicapped in its efforts to relieve the breathless patient, by the dead weight of the clothes piled upon it. The picture is most vivid in cases of heart and lung disease, but it is noteworthy in all cases of acute and serious illness."

Another practical hint is that a nurse who would most carefully protect her patient against a draught of cold air may forget that his actively-acting and overheated skin may be as effectually chilled by letting him wash his hands and face in cold water.

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(To be continued.)

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