

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 871.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1904.

Vol. XXXIII.

Editorial.

A HEALTH CONSCIENCE.

The development of what has aptly been described as a "health conscience" is a point to which all nurses should turn their attention, for the possession and cultivation of it will certainly increase very materially their professional efficiency. To consider this conscience first in connection with the nurse herself. She is bound, if she can, to keep herself in good health, for poor and indifferent health detracts from her capability as a nurse. A healthy nurse certainly has a beneficial effect upon a sick person, who appears in some way to absorb lacking vitality from contact with her. This is especially noticeable in the case of masseuses, and it is well known that if a masseuse is out of health the most skilful rubbing she can apply will be of little benefit to a patient. It therefore behoves all nurses to attend to the laws of hygiene in relation to themselves.

It is a curious fact that, while a nurse will attend to the ventilation and the temperature of a ward or of a patient's room, and would be shocked at the suggestion from a chilly patient that a window should be closed; though she knows and preaches the benefit of daily exercise, as often as not when she goes off duty she will go straight to the nurses' sitting-room, huddle over the fire, make no attempt to get out into the fresh air, which is especially essential to her after hours of attendance on the sick, and finally will go to bed in a small room with the windows tightly closed.

Another point upon which nurses are apt to disregard the laws of health is in relation to the amount of sleep they take while on night duty. In hospital, when they are bound to be in the Home at a certain time, this is not so observable, though even then they often allow themselves the smallest amount permitted by the rules, but when working in private houses they often spend on recreation the hours which should be allotted to sleep. Night nursing is always trying, as every reversal of the laws of

nature must be, and it is therefore of especial importance that nurses should take a sufficient amount of rest in bed if they are to keep in a fit condition for work.

Many more instances could be adduced of the way in which nurses who are concerned in the restoration of health to others constantly defy hygienic laws themselves, but the above instances will suffice to explain our meaning.

In relation to patients, it is certainly the imperative duty of a nurse to see that the hygienic surroundings of the patient are as good as possible, both on general lines and in relation to special conditions. Thus one nurse who is sent for to nurse a case of sore throat considers she has done her duty if she carries out the treatment prescribed conscientiously and exactly. Another realises that the nurse is in even a better position than the doctor to discover sources of possible septic infection, and quietly and systematically sets herself to ascertain if these exist, and if so to report them, so that the cause of the trouble may be removed.

In the homes of the poor the nurse with a health conscience has endless opportunities for following its promptings, and the more she develops it the more successful her work will be. Here, again, she has exceptional opportunities for coming in contact with unhygienic conditions. The friends of the sufferer from phthisis can be taught the paramount necessity of open windows, of the patient having a room to himself, of the disinfection and destruction of sputa. Structural defects, prejudicial to health, where a landlord refuses to remedy them, may be reported to the sanitary inspector. Mothers of families may be taught facts, of which they are too frequently ignorant, as to the feeding of infants, and the nutritive value of various classes of foods.

Examples might be multiplied indefinitely, but if once nurses will realise the importance of developing a health conscience, and keeping it sensitive, they will discover speedily for themselves the way in which practical effect may be given to general principles.

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