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## Editorial.

### THE NURSING OF ORTHOPÆDICS.

The care of orthopædic cases is, as a rule, not a popular branch of their work with nurses, "there is so little nursing" they often say.

But is this really so? It depends largely upon what we regard as nursing—the patient is not, as a rule, suffering from physical weakness. Perhaps he has had the deformity for which he, or his friends for him, have sought hospital treatment, all his life; he is in his usual bodily health, and when the first few days after an operation have passed, the fact of being confined to bed for some weeks, while a certain line of treatment is being carried out, is just as tedious to him as it would be to any man or woman, boy or girl in robust health.

By far the larger number of orthopædic cases treated in hospitals are children—children of the class in whom the Lord Mayor of London takes so deep an interest. They may be encased in plaster-jackets, or have splints applied. They may be wearing Scarpa's shoes, but, as a rule, they are in no bodily discomfort, and the spirits of a ward full of orthopædic boys are as uproarious as those of the same number in any other section of Society. Surely it is no mean testimony to a nurse's skill if she can keep these boys happy and amused while still strictly carrying out medical directions in regard to their treatment. To be really successful, a nurse must be able not only to perform actual nursing duties but to manage her patients, and nowhere is this art of management better learnt than in the wards of an orthopædic hospital. For instance, a nurse who has served an apprenticeship in such a hospital, when she goes private nursing, will feel quite capable of coping with an infirmary full of boys should it fall to her lot to be sent to

nurse in an epidemic in a public school, a position in which many of her colleagues would be hopelessly at sea.

The secret of good nursing lies, to a large extent, in the possession of the gift of imagination which enables a nurse to put herself in the patient's place, and so to understand his feelings. Thus, instead of complaining that orthopædic children are "so naughty and unruly," she will devise occupations which will keep them employed and happy. In this, in London, the London County Council has come to her assistance by providing teachers who come at regular hours to undertake the systematic instruction of the children in the wards, thus fulfilling the twofold purpose of carrying on their education through the many months spent in hospital, and also of keeping them happy and amused. In this direction the County Council is doing excellent work, for many of these children are very intelligent, and as most of them must be physically handicapped in after-life it is of special importance that their education should not be neglected.

But of actual nursing duties an orthopædic nurse has not a few, and she will have no reason to regret the time she has devoted to this branch of work. The exact adjustment of a Scarpa's shoe, upon which the successful treatment of a case so often depends is not an easy matter, and indeed skill is only attained after considerable and painstaking experience. Then in cases of this kind pressure sores on the heels, and elsewhere, are specially liable to occur, and the utmost vigilance is needed, as experienced nurses find to their cost, if they are to be avoided. The secret of success in orthopædic work is attention to minute details—details which are left to so large an extent to the nurse to carry out, as a rule, that her share in a successful cure is no small one.

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