

Medical Matters.

TUBERCULOSIS IN INFANCY AND CHILDHOOD.



The *British Journal of Tuberculosis* has issued a special number, "as a plea and an argument for an advance in our methods and measures for the prevention and treatment of tuberculous disease in infancy and childhood." As this journal points out, "every year in the United Kingdom there are about 700,000 deaths and some 1,200,000 births, and fully one-fourth to one-third of the 1,200,000 are born to want or squalor. Living under conditions lacking in almost all hygienic essentials, it is not surprising that large numbers of children become tuberculous. Autopsies on children dying from all causes under 15 years of age show the presence of tuberculosis, estimated by various observers at from 14 to 40 per cent." Professor Grancher states that in the scholars of the primary schools of Paris a characteristic predisposition to tuberculosis exists in 15 per cent. of the children. As far as can be estimated, in this country something like 25 per cent. of the children in public orphanages, either by inheritance or otherwise, should be considered as predisposed to tuberculous disease. The evidence presented at the last International Congress on Tuberculosis went far to show that tuberculosis is almost always contracted by the child about the family hearth, and one of the surest ways to stamp out tuberculous disease is to provide adequate care and rational protection for the child. There is immediate need for the establishment of suitable sanatoria for consumptive and other tuberculous children in England. France has established marine health stations for this object, while Germany has founded forest and other hygienic schools for its tuberculous and delicate scholars. The special number contains articles on "Prenatal life and tuberculosis," "The channels of infection for tubercle in children," "The hygiene of the nursery and prevention of tuberculosis," "Tuberculosis in Lancashire and in Scotch school children," and an interesting paper by Dr. Mary Scharlieb on "Tuberculosis in women and children."

The whole number deserves, and we hope will obtain, widespread attention, not only from the medical profession and trained nurses, who are already convinced of the need for the improvements advocated, but also from the public who must be educated on these matters before any general reforms can be made in the sanitary laws of the country.

The Training of the Nurse in the Wards and the Position and Duties of the Matron.*

By MISS ISLA STEWART,

Matron and Superintendent of Nursing, St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

My paper naturally divides itself into two heads. "The practical training of the Nurse in the Wards" and "The position and responsibility of the Matron." These two subjects seem somewhat wide apart, but in reality they are indissolubly connected.

The practical work of the probationer in the wards of the Hospital is, without doubt, the most important part of her training. The theoretical teaching, which is becoming a more and more prominent feature in most Training Schools, is of most valuable assistance in her intellectual development, but the classes, lectures, and demonstrations, whether gathered together in a preliminary training, or spread over the whole of the three years' work, must always rank second to the practical work in the wards. Please do not think I undervalue theoretical training, which not only increases the probationer's intelligence and capacity, but also draws the line between the purely mechanical and the highly developed scientific nurse, but, nevertheless, it is true that what actually makes the nurse is the daily and hourly work in the wards, and at the bedside of the patient.

Twenty or thirty years ago in England nurses were trained for one year, and were sent out after that as fully qualified nurses, and no one will, I think, deny, that there were then very many excellent nurses. Now we train them for three years, and find that all too short for what we want to teach them. The shorter training was done mainly at the expense of the patient. There was little time for teaching, and no one very well qualified to teach. The probationers had, therefore, to find out how to do things for themselves. When the year's work was finished, and sometimes before that, they were appointed Sisters of wards, and went out private nursing, as fully qualified nurses. Their knowledge was necessarily small, and their experience even less, but their courage was great, and as their work was done without even the supervision which to some extent guided their year of probation, they learned most from their mistakes, and gained experience at the expense

* Read at the International Conference on Nursing at Paris, June, 1907.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)