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Editorial.

THE NURSING OF SICK CHILDREN.

One of the branches of her work in which the nurse trained in a general hospital is often imperfectly grounded is the nursing of sick children. Probably this art is ideally taught in a children's hospital, but many nurses cannot afford to give additional time at the end of a three years' course to this branch, and it is important that they should have some insight into it during their general training.

For the efficient nursing of the children as well as for the better training of nurses and students, in all the larger hospitals a ward or wards should be set apart for children. There are many reasons why it is undesirable that they should be nursed in the adult wards.

First, in regard to the adult patients. It is usual, when special wards are not provided for children, to allot the children under seven to the women's wards and those over seven to the men's wards. The result is that the women patients are frequently disturbed at night by crying children when it is most important that they should have a quiet night. In regard to the male wards, we are bound to say that the presence of the children in the wards is often a source of pleasure and has a humanising influence on the adult patients. But the effect on the children is not so good. They are constantly petted and indulged and are apt to become precocious. The kindly discipline of a children's ward is more wholesome for them.

But the strongest point in favour of children's wards is that the hours can be arranged to suit the needs of the little patients in a way which is impossible where their interests are not the first consideration. For example, as soon as the midday dinner is over and the children have received attention, the ward blinds can be drawn

down and from 12.30 to 2 p.m. they can be encouraged to take the midday sleep which is important to a child in health and much more so to one debilitated or exhausted by illness. How quickly children fall into this habit when they know it is expected of them may be readily observed by a visit to a ward where it is enforced. Again, the work should be so organised that the lights are turned down by 6.30 at the latest and the children settled for the night, so that they may have the long night's rest which is so essential to them. It will easily be seen that where the work is so arranged they are placed in conditions much more favourable to recovery than if there is no break in the middle of the day and if the long evening only ends at eight o'clock or after. The childish brain becomes over-excited and too alert, and the sleep which is so badly needed is often denied when at the close of a fourteen hours' day—for breakfasts are served at 6 a.m., if not before—the lights are at length turned down and, weary and fretful, the children endeavour to sleep.

Anyone acquainted with a well-managed children's ward will admit that it is one of the happiest places imaginable. It is also one in which regular habits can be inculcated and enforced, and the children under the kindly dominion of a Sister and nurses who love and understand them—and only such will ever be successful in the care of children, well or ill—develop all the endearing ways which a child in a happy environment instinctively adopts. It is almost impossible to recognise a neglected child, after it has been in hospital for a time, for the same. It may, on admission, be suspicious, miserable and unloving, but in a short time it expands in a congenial atmosphere as flowers do in the sunshine, and probably ends by being the pet and darling of the ward. All nurses in training should spend some time in a children's ward.

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