

of becoming capable helpers of the little ones.

With children, even more than with adults, the first help towards cure, which is the aim of nursing, is a history of the family, the second the history of the child itself from birth. These are the foundations upon which the careful building up of stone by stone of the healing process must be firmly established. As regards the family history, illnesses of the father, illnesses of the mother, brothers, and sisters on either side, and the causes of any deaths. These questions will have special, though often not expressed, reference to tuberculosis, venereal disease, and alcoholism. The condition of the mother during pregnancy, the character and duration of the labour, history of previous abortions or stillbirths, the home life—all these need to be known. Then follows the life-history of the child itself from birth, its weight and increase in weight, whether breast or bottle-fed and for how long, the age at which dentition took place, at which the child first sat up, first walked, and was able to speak comparatively intelligibly, the accidents and diseases of its earlier years, its temperament and character. Every scrap of information which the mother can furnish, no matter how lengthily or how ignorantly given, must be patiently listened to and persistently sought. The orange must be dry before it is thrown away.

And then, concurrently and subsequently, the nurse plays for the first time her own unaided part. It is a wise plan, unless there is actual occasion for immediate action, to allow the child to become accustomed to your presence, before paying any or much attention to it. A wise hospital Sister used to say, "Best leave them mostly to themselves for twelve hours, and they will soon come round." This does not obviously imply neglect. Meanwhile you have your opportunity of studying the patient—a matter in which you should proceed systematically. Often you will know already from the doctor what you are fighting. Just as often the question will be an open one. Never forget the possibility of some degree of mental deficiency of a greater or lesser extent.

Note the quantity and character of sleep, the appetite or want of it, the amount of food taken, the irritability of temper, restlessness, the appearance of the eyes, the lines of the face, position of head, trunk, and limbs, condition of skin, whether dry or moist, of natural, earthy, yellow, or marble colour. Be on the watch for symptoms or expressions of pain. Take opportunity of ascertaining any lesion or bodily defect, observe the discharges from the body.

In the nursing of children there are a few

simple rules which it is always well to bear in mind. They are both a guard and guide.

Headache may be nothing but the result of eye-strain; sore throat may be largely produced by confined bowels.

Diarrhœa is commonly the result of a toxin in the body, which needs to be cleared away before any further action can be taken.

Restlessness proceeds quite as often from discomfort as from pain, and more often than is supposed from thirst.

A high temperature and quick pulse may be dependent on temporary excitement, on a bout of crying, or on constipation.

A depressed fontanelle in infants, an unclosed fontanelle at the 24th month, is always an indication that the child is sick.

If it were possible to write down any definite principles to govern the general nursing of sick children, who differ as one flower differs from another, I would say, endeavour first to establish a sense of confidence, then a sense of comfort, the two being often interdependent; get a regular and satisfactory evacuation of the bowels and action of the liver—the two are by no means synonymous—and only after that you may hope to attack the curative side of your work. Sometimes you will be astonished to find that your work is by that time almost half done.

To "never look a baby in the face" I would add "never touch a child with cold hands."

Bear in mind that increase of weight is often the earliest, and occasionally the only, appreciable sign of better things, especially in a prolonged illness. There is in this country a serious neglect of this simple aid to knowledge.

Bathing, both hot and cold, is, as the old books have it, "a sovran remedie," relaxing tired muscles, soothing irritable nerves, inducing sleep, that best of all remedies for childhood's ills. Never be afraid of bathing, unless the doctor forbids.

All these are but generalities. The secrets of soothing and smoothing and taking away, not only pain but the idea of it, are the secrets which cannot be taught, though they may be learnt. More commonly they are evolved. The mere pat of a pillow, the good-night kiss, will bring rest sometimes to wide-open eyes.

All brightness, all gentleness, the nurse must be. A frown will bring the ominous pucker to a baby's mouth, a quick word will cut to the sensitive soul of a child. And withal she must rule firmly, if unostentatiously. If it needs, as need it does, an angel to nurse the nerve-stricken patient of our degenerate days, it takes, to deal efficiently with a child and a lunatic, an archangel.

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