

A Special Curriculum for Private Nurses.*

By Miss J. C. VAN LAanschot-HUBRECHT.

The suitable training of nurses presents many difficulties. The subject of this paper is the training of the private nurse. My experience as Secretary of the Dutch Nurses' Association has taught me that their education is still very incomplete. To my idea it is a great mistake for a nurse, who has merely her certificate for general nursing, obtained after a three years' training in an hospital where no paying patients are nursed, to be allowed to go in for private nursing. Even if she were technically fit for her task, which it is almost impossible for her to be under the present conditions, the complaints of the public prove, that many of the nurses from lack of refinement, good manners, and general knowledge, are totally unfit for the work they take upon themselves.

Of late years nursing has not the attraction for women that it had formerly. For one thing women have now obtained a footing in most of the professions which formerly were open to men only. Twenty years ago a girl, who had to work for her living or desired to become a useful member of society, had only two courses open to her: that of teacher or nurse; nowadays she has nearly all the professions to choose from. Hence there are fewer better-educated young women who take up the nurses' profession. A second factor is the incomplete training the nurses receive. And while well-educated women seeking to become nurses grow less in number every year, the demand for nurses becomes greater. Consequently the training-schools have been obliged to be less particular in their conditions for admittance, and accept as probationers young women whose school education has ceased at their fourteenth year. Among those are many well qualified for hospital work, young women loving their profession, thoroughly trustworthy, and whom the hospital authorities gladly assign posts of confidence. But they are not fit for private nursing because of their lack of general culture and refinement.

In our days high claims are made of a private nurse. There is in the first place her technical knowledge to consider, which should be far more extensive than that of the hospital nurse, because she works more independently, and has greater responsibilities than the nurse in the institution, who always has a sister or a physician to resort to in emergencies. The

* Read at the International Congress of Nurses, London, July, 1909.

private nurse in such case has to trust to what she has been taught.

Then it often happens that the nurse is completely isolated with her patient, or else they spend long hours together, hours which for nervous, chronic, or convalescent patients should be spent in the pursuit of agreeable pastimes. We all know that light handicraft is often prescribed as a part of the treatment, and the nurse, in order to be able to adequately perform her task in that case must be skilled in different kinds of light occupation such as kindergarten, slöjd, needlework, etc. She should further be sufficiently educated to carry on an intelligent conversation upon art, literature, music, or the topic of the day.

The private nurse comes into contact with all sorts and conditions of men. We desire that she shall everywhere be treated as a lady; but in order to bring this about the nurse herself must be a lady. She should be able to readily adapt herself to every circumstance, and possess the dignity and good manners which place her above the level of the domestic servants.

A private nurse will be called at one time to a rich household where she will have no other duty than the care of her patient; another time she will be called to people of moderate means, where she will have to put her shoulder to the wheel, and if it is the mistress who is ill, probably have to take her place. That part of the nurse's work requires knowledge of household economics. But wherever the nurse is, she is responsible for the food of her patient, she must know how to make up a dainty menu, the kind of food allowed to her patient, and how to prepare it. Therefore, she must learn general and diet cooking.

The Psychiatric and Neurological Society in Holland came to the conclusion a few years ago that the certificate it gave to its nurses was no guarantee for the technical knowledge of those who went out as private nurses. It decided to give for the future two certificates. The first one, A, is awarded after a three years' training in mental nursing, and declares the nurse fully qualified for nursing in an asylum. After another year of study a second certificate, B, is given, which states that the nurse is qualified for the more independent work outside an asylum.

I should like to see similar rules established for general nursing. The curriculum for the certificate B of the Psychiatric and Neurological Society includes the same subjects as for the certificate A, but they are treated more in detail, including besides cooking and materia medica. I should wish to add to this curriculum household economics, diet cooking, slöjd, kindergarten, literature, and reading aloud in

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