

## The Value of a Nurse in a Tuberculosis Hospital.\*

BY DR. BENJAMIN LEE.

*Assistant to the Commissioner of Health,  
Pennsylvania.*

A physician, who has had much experience in the management of tuberculosis dispensaries, says: "A tuberculosis dispensary cannot possibly get along without a nurse. She is simply invaluable." In the first place her instincts lead her to maintain a degree of cleanliness and order in the office which commands the respect of the visitor, and conduces to the comfort of the patient. In the second, there are many minor details of dispensary office work, which she can take charge of, thus saving the time of the physician, such as the care of instruments, and the taking of chest and height measurements, weighing and the taking of temperatures.

Taking histories, making records, and other clerical work are a part of her duty. It is safe to say that a physician working with a nurse can cover at least three times as much work in a given time as one without this aid. Her mere presence in the office gives the applicant a homelike feeling, and relieves the sense of apprehension that an examination always excites. Especially is this so when the patient is a woman, and in that case the aid of the nurse in arranging the dress for a satisfactory examination is essential and relieves embarrassment.

But useful as she is in the office, her services outside are of even greater importance in promoting the success of the dispensary, and the recovery of the patients. The instructions given the patient by the physician for the conduct of the patient's daily life, even though accompanied by printed cards and pamphlets, are apt to fall upon unheeding ears. With the best intentions in the world, the patient will be careless and neglectful, and will allow the idle talk of relatives, friends, and neighbours to carry more weight than the injunctions of the doctor. Matters of the utmost importance, from the standpoint of medical experience, appear trifling in their eyes because they do not comprehend their working. "Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus," the high sounding names that they read in the quack advertisements in the papers, command their respect more "than all the waters of Israel." They have no use for any precept so simple as

"Wash and be clean," or for fresh air. Could anything be more ridiculous? And food? They have been eating all their lives. Sometimes the nurse must visit the patients in their homes, go over the rules of the dispensary with them, and make certain that they understand them in every detail as pertaining to personal hygiene and home sanitation. She must investigate the sleeping room, see that every provision is made for ventilation during the hours of sleep, and, not less important, for the admission of sunlight during the day; see that no one occupies the same bed, or, if avoidable, the same room with the patient. Insist on their taking the proper food at the proper hours; insist on a certain amount of rest, and in every possible way oppose the heresy that what the patient needs is exercise; instruct the well members of the family as to the danger to them of the presence of a case of tuberculosis, and as to the precautions the patient should take as to the disposal of the sputum, the indiscriminate use of table furniture, and the sterilisation of such articles after use, and the boiling of all washable clothing and bedding apart from the family wash.

As the nurse gradually becomes familiar with the family, and they become accustomed to her visits, they will make her a confidant, and if she finds another member of the family who exhibits suspicious symptoms, she will advise such person to consult the dispensary physician and have the presence or absence of the disease decided.

She will examine the house and its environment for evidences of dampness, and use her influence to have the cause of such conditions removed. The places where patients work will also be visited, and advice given for the improvement of unhygienic surroundings. If the occupation be such as is generally considered prejudicial to a consumptive she will report the same to the physician, in order that he may give such advice as he deems proper under the circumstances. The financial condition of the family will also be noted.

Subsequent to her first visit, a written report of the conditions found is rendered to the physician in charge of the dispensary. It will be her duty to note especially the directions given the patient by the physician in each case, and keep in mind those of an unusual nature, such as apply to that particular patient. She will attend to the distribution of milk and eggs, receive any complaints of quality or irregularity of furnishing them, and especially assure herself that the food is used by the patient, and not by other members of the family or by neighbours. In this way alone can

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