

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD

EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,229

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21, 1911.

Vol. XLVII.

EDITORIAL.

THE CHILD.

The care of a little child is a duty which most women love, but a duty which carries with it great responsibility, for a child is largely dependent upon his caretaker for health, for happiness, for mental development on the right lines, and in the plastic days of childhood it is possible to receive impressions which, for good or evil, dominate the life of the adult.

To a trained nurse the responsibility comes with additional force, for the children who pass into her care are ill, sometimes so acutely that the little life hangs in the balance, and her knowledge, skill and devotion—or the lack of them—may turn it to life or death. Sometimes the child may not be acutely ill, but may need cleansing, feeding, protecting, as in many cases which come under the supervision of school nurses, whose duty it is to point out to parents, tactfully and, if needs be, forcibly, the necessity for a higher standard of care than that which has so far sufficed.

It therefore behoves nurses to study healthy children, their characters, needs, and capacities, for otherwise they cannot hope to understand the sick ones for whom they have to care. We all know women to whom children turn instinctively, sure of comprehension. We know others—possessed maybe by a strong sense of duty and keenly desirous to do their best for their charges—by whom children are as surely repelled. The trust of a little child is one of the greatest compliments an adult can receive.

The first thing, therefore, is to learn to understand child nature, for it is a curious fact that many adults seem to have forgotten their own childish days, the keenness of their joys and sorrows, and the causes of both, and must con afresh the lessons

of childhood if they are to be successful children's nurses. They must try to understand what is taking place in the minds of their small charges, always remembering that the mind of a child shares the immaturity of the body, that it is cruel to expect of him standards which are rightly demanded of his elders, and that "forced development is always followed by arrested development in the next stage."

Mr. George Hamilton Archibald, writing in *The Child* on "The Aim of Religious Education," thus describes the unfolding life:—"A child's brain may be likened to a garden. A garden is progressive in its unfolding. In the early spring we have the snowdrops and the crocuses, then the daffodils, tulips and the wallflowers come to perfection. After that the forget-me-nots, then the calceolarias burst into bloom, followed by the stocks and geraniums; later on the asters and the autumnal chrysanthemums. Each blooms in the fulness of time. So with the cells in the child's brain. Loyalty, fidelity and chivalry are dominant in a 12- or 14-year-old boy, but you will find none of them in a 6-year-old. He would rather tell on a companion than not. . . . You might as well try to make calceolarias grow in February as expect loyalty in a 6-year-old. Disinterest and disaster will follow any such attempt." Therefore, in our relations with children in hospital wards, private houses and schools, let us learn to recognize the limitations of immaturity and refrain from expecting impossibilities, lest we place on the childish shoulders burdens too heavy to be borne. In all our relations with children let us remember the injunction of the wisest of men: "get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding." How many children have missed happiness for want of comprehending care, the knack of which is the secret of Love the great illuminator.

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