

THE CARE OF THE AGED IN POOR LAW INFIRMARIES.

A large proportion of nursing in our workhouse infirmaries is devoted to this important work. The manner in which this duty is discharged stamps the nurse as good or bad.

It is generally acknowledged that the nursing of young children demands a higher degree of efficiency than any other branch. The faculty of observation has to be developed to its utmost, or important and vital symptoms will be overlooked. The aged are the pathetic children of Nature's decay, and there is something appealing in their sickness which should rouse the protective instinct of every woman, but, above all, of every nurse. Only the efficient and highly trained should be entrusted with their care.

The feeble spark of life is as sacred as abounding vitality, and great is the responsibility of those who neglect any means of cherishing it. The gift of life is so stupendous, and such an awful responsibility to those to whom it is in a sense committed, that the unspoken thought in the back of the mind that the patient is very old and therefore does not greatly matter should never be allowed to linger an instant. An account will one day have to be rendered to the Lord and Giver of Life of our share in its preservation.

Just one or two practical points as to the nursing of the aged. One of the commonest sins of our workhouse infirmaries is the keeping of the aged in bed—perpetual bed. In hospital practice this is quite the reverse, and the axiom is acknowledged, "Keep an old person in bed and he will die." "Get him (or her) up, Sister," is the order in all cases where it is at all practicable. One can recall many instances of where the local condition had to be sacrificed to the general.

Unduly prolonged confinement to bed in cases of acute illness or accident do often in fact result in the death of the patient, where an intelligent recognition of the value of getting him up would probably have saved life.

The value of position in bed also is not sufficiently recognised; and this is generally left to the discretion of the nurse. It is very seldom advisable to leave an old person in a completely recumbent position, and for some portion of the day at least the sitting position, made easy with pillows, should be resorted to. By attention to this point hypostatic congestion may often be avoided, and the warning of its approach in the little short cough should at once indicate this change of position.

Patients who from one cause or another have become hopelessly bedridden are liable to many dangers and discomforts, which if not skilfully and continuously combated will render their already wearisome existence painful and miserable.

Cold extremities, contraction of the limbs, bedsores, constipation from diminished peristalsis, incontinence of urine, indigestion are all things which an efficient and conscientious nurse will know how to mitigate, if not to cure.

One word may be said here for the value of an ample ring water pillow encased in a thin pillow slip in cases where there is constant incontinence of urine. Its practical use needs only to be tested.

With regard to feeding: How much can be done in this respect for their comfort and pleasure? Meals are the one event for them in a long and monotonous day, and, alas! often very little attention is paid to the individual taste of the patient. The *petits soins* of the infirmary ward mark the true nurse, and it is only from the highly trained that what Carlyle calls our "hardly entreated brother" may look for relief of body and mind.

"Pillow smoothing" has been greatly sneered at, but perhaps it would be well if more of it were not altogether omitted.

P. L. G.

SCHOOL NURSES UNDER THE L.C.C.

At Tuesday's meeting of the London County Council the Education Committee recommended—in connection with two vacancies for temporary school nurses for cleansing work—that, subject to their passing the usual medical examination, Miss Mary Ellen Comyn and Miss Edith Susanna Crisp be employed temporarily as school nurses in the public health department for a period not exceeding one year, as from dates to be arranged, each at a salary at the rate of £80 a year.

THE LEAGUE OF SCHOOL NURSES.

On Wednesday, February 14th, Dr. Shrub-sall gave a lecture to the L.C.C. School Nurses on "The Influence of Habits on the Structure of the Body."

1. The effect of locomotive habits.
2. The effect of eating habits.

The lecture, which was extremely interesting and instructive, was illustrated by lantern slides, some very fine ones being shown.

Dr. Shrub-sall received hearty applause at the close.

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