

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,260

SATURDAY, MAY 25, 1912.

Vol. XLVIII.

EDITORIAL.

THE SCOPE OF DISTRICT NURSING.

It is a fine thing to start with ideals, whatever our chosen work in life may be; it is finer to hold on to those ideals, whether they seem to be attainable or not; for, to those who refuse to abandon them, visions have a way of becoming translated into realities.

In adopting district nursing as her work in life, a nurse may limit her conception of duty to caring for the patients in her charge faithfully and well, or she may adopt a wider outlook, and consider everything within her sphere of work which tends to raise the standard of health, and to prevent disease, in the community amongst whom she working.

It is the former nurse who is apt to raise the cry of insufficient occupation and dulness, when she accepts a post in a country place, where acute cases and operations are comparatively rare, and where she soon longs to be back in a town district, or hospital ward, where the daily routine is mapped out for her. But her complaint does not arise because the work is not ready to her hand, but because of her lack of imagination—because she fails to visualize, behind things as they are, things as they might be. If she were to look beyond the case to which she is called to first causes, she would find plenty to occupy her attention. The child sick unto death of infantile diarrhoea, deformed with rickets, or dragging out a weary existence with tubercular disease, needs nursing care, it is true, but to those who can read the signs aright such cases point to the need for the establishment of Schools for Mothers, where, amongst other things, the results of unclean milk, and imperfectly cleansed bottles, can be taught; for "epidemic" diarrhoea is the disease of bottle-fed babies, and usually the result of

decomposition of the milk in hot weather. Again, rickets is essentially a result of improper feeding, and tuberculosis flourishes in dirt and darkness. If mothers are taught these things, they will not only turn to the nurse to help them when disease occurs, but will be actively helpful in combating the conditions which foster disease.

Similar instances could many times be multiplied, but it is the underlying principle which matters. Once this is grasped, work falls readily into line, and it is just because the 55 nurses of the Chicago Visiting Nurse Association (all of whom write the letters R. N. after their names) have seen the vision of things as they might be, and are struggling to translate it into fact, that the work done by the Association is so fine.

Here are some of its ideals: Stricter enforcement, by a larger force of inspectors, of the housing laws; cleaner milk for the babies from tuberculin-tested cows; obligatory birth registration; grants to the City Health Department adequate to their needs, and their possibilities of fine, preventive work; open-air schools, and more open spaces and playgrounds; a United Charities Building, where all could work together without waste of time and energy; a perfect social service in following up hospital out-patients; the study and carrying into effect of the science of eugenics, so that the nurses shall not have the degenerate and foredoomed sufferers to care for that they have at present. It is a fine conception, and certainly the nurse who sets out to attain it will not have much spare time on her hands, but she will have the satisfaction of knowing that she has averted a great amount of preventible suffering.

We recommend the nurse who desires to increase her knowledge of the modern conception of one's duty to one's neighbour to read "Democracy and Social Ethics" by Miss Jane Addams of the Hull House, Chicago.

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[previous page](#)

[next page](#)