

recognized, and also because a vast number of excellent brains amongst the students, who, if they had sufficient encouragement and opportunities, would be attracted to this field of work and research, now, from their scanty acquaintance with it, cast it aside with some such remark as "Oh, I can't stand loonies."

One or two hospitals—St. Thomas' and Charing Cross, for example—take border-line cases as out-patients, and there seems no reason why a few beds should not be allotted to these cases. All that is wanted in addition to the ordinary equipment of the ward is that the door may be locked if necessary, and that the patients may be sent out for walks. A hospital has been opened at Brighton chiefly to do this work, which, to their shame, hospitals with teaching schools will not treat themselves.

The consequence is that nurses in their general training do not see these early mental and neurotic cases, and the ordinary nurse in private practice is quite incapable of coping with them. Surely it is quite as much a disgrace for a general nurse to be turned out of a hospital ignorant of mental work as for a mental nurse to be ignorant of general work.

It is generally believed that the Matrons are averse to the admission of mental cases to general hospitals, that they do not like them mixed up with august medicine and surgery; yet why should they be turned away more than any other cases? Many of them are quite unsuitable for treatment as pauper patients. It is rank red tape.

As a matter of fact, medical students do have a few lectures on mental diseases, and some hospitals have a miserable arrangement whereby batches of students walk round the wards of an asylum thirty or so at a time, but this is utterly inadequate. The average student when he becomes qualified knows practically nothing about the treatment of the insane—a condition of things which is deplorable and wicked. Very little can be learnt about insanity from books; the only thing which is any good is to live with and observe the patients. The mind is an intangible thing, and the little we know of it cannot be put down on paper. Nevertheless, there is no part of the human outfit which is so definitely human as the mind, and none which is, to those able to grasp this fact, so absorbingly interesting. Moreover, every year nervous and mental conditions are becoming more urgently important to the nation; the brain is being more finely trained, and the more delicate the mechanism, the more easily it is put out of order.

It must be borne in mind that there is no form of illness which nurses and doctors are more

certain of meeting in their general work than mental and nervous disorders.

It is very important that nurses should be trained to recognize early symptoms of mental trouble, because they so often get patients before they are certifiable. At present there is a great difficulty in getting a sufficient supply of good mental nurses. Yet no section of the nursing world is better paid.

Among the qualities needed in a mental nurse the maternal instinct is of great importance, an instinct which would lead her to mother not only children of her own, but any child or man or woman who needs it. It is this which keeps her happy with a dull case. Moreover, she should be incurably optimistic, remembering that every case is improvable, and many are curable. Good-tempered patience, cheerfulness—not too aggressive—and conscientiousness are necessary. No one needs the last-mentioned quality so much as the mental nurse, otherwise she may become less vigilant, and, with familiarity with these cases, may think that the patient will not attempt to injure himself. This is never a safe supposition with impulsive cases, and no patients try to "do" their nurses so much as mental ones. Unselfishness and self-control are other requisites, though nurses ought to like their work so much that they enjoy doing it, and if self-control requires constant effort, the fact probably proves that the nurse is not intended for mental work.

It may be assumed that a perfect person is required, but some faulty people have the power of getting on with mental patients; and one has to remember that one type of nurse is necessary for one kind of mental patient, and one for another.

This branch of mental therapeutics will, I believe, in the future be more carefully elaborated than at present, but as far as my observations go in private nursing, the best results are attained when the temperament of the nurse is complementary to that of the patient; this to some extent is indicated by physique; thus a jolly, fat nurse should be selected for a thin, melancholic patient; a thin, gentle nurse for a fat, excited patient, and so on.

The reason for a careful choice of temperament is that if nurse and patient are complementary and congenial, the effort demanded of both is lessened.

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We are glad to note that a suggestion that some permanent memorial should be established to the late Sister Maclaren, who did, for twenty-eight years, splendid work at the General Infirmary, Wolverhampton, is being cordially supported. Such service for humanity deserves recognition.

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