

THE ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION.

SOME POINTS IN PERSONAL HYGIENE.

The last of the present series of lectures organized by the Royal British Nurses' Association was brought to a successful conclusion by an interesting lecture by Dr. Leonard Williams on "Some Points in Personal Hygiene." The chair was taken by Dr. Percival White, who introduced the lecturer as the Editor of the *Medical Press and Circular*, and the author of a most excellent book on "Minor Maladies and Their Treatment."

HOW TO KEEP WELL.

The lecturer said that he preferred to take as his text, "How to Keep Well," for to help people to do that was a most practical way of helping them at the present time, and the part nurses could take in disseminating such knowledge was most important. Health was a most precious possession.

THE HEAD.

THE EYES.—Beginning with the eyes, Dr. Williams asked "How many people realize that the eyes may be a source of chronic ill-health?" If short sight is very marked, they perhaps realize that they must wear glasses; but, if it is slightly defective, they may not believe their eyesight to be at fault. They may even see correctly, but at a price which they cannot afford to pay; they correct the slight defect at the price of sapping the nervous system. The body has only a certain amount of nervous energy, and if one organ saps more than its fair share the others must go without. Thus people who suffer from slight errors of refraction may be the victims of ill-health they are never able to explain. Headache, dyspepsia, chronic stomach trouble and neurasthenia may all be due to defective eyesight. There is no condition in the body of a chronic kind that may not be due to this cause. If there is reason to suspect it, an oculist should be consulted, because due correction of the eyesight is a delicate and difficult operation, demanding the attention of an oculist who is a good refractonist.

It is a well-known fact that short-sighted people who are unable to appreciate and see things at a distance have a tendency to become introspective, and this may happen with other uncorrected errors of vision.

THE NOSE.—The lecturer emphasised the importance of free nasal respiration, and said that mouth breathers may suffer no great inconvenience in the country and at the seaside, but the moment they come into a large town like London and breathe unfiltered air through the mouth, the condition is prejudicial. The nose acts as a mechanical and antiseptic filter, arresting microbes and warming the air before it gets into the lungs.

For the nurse, more than for the ordinary citizen, it is most important to have free nasal respiration, as she is in frequent contact with atmospheric-borne toxins and poisons. Again, the nose must be kept clean. It is quite as important to wash the inside of the nose as to wash the hands. The toilet of the nostrils should never be neglected morning or evening. In addition, he recommended placing inside the nostrils some antiseptic preparation, such as "Inhalone," prepared by Parke Davis & Co.; or "Rhino-Gomenol," a French preparation. He had known people who had followed his advice in this respect who had never had a cold since. If this plan were generally adopted, there would be far fewer colds, ill-health and malaise. It was important that probationers should have their noses examined and free nasal respiration secured. Many poisons could enter the body through the nose, amongst them the germs of influenza, colds, mumps, small pox and scarlet fever. If the nose functions healthily and normal, there is a much better chance of overcoming them. With the mouth breather, aerial poisons find the way to the stomach, which is weak in defensives to such poisons.

THE MOUTH.—The mouth and teeth should be kept clean. A large number of people cleanse mouth and teeth once a day only, and that in the morning. In this case the night should be the time selected, but the ideal plan is to rinse the mouth after each meal.

Dr. Williams said that during the last four or five years there has been a perfect orgy of mouth cleanliness, and thousands and thousands of healthy teeth have been extracted and offered on the shrine of pyorrhœa. Pyorrhœa is not a primary disease, but is due to poison circulating in the blood and the proper course is to find out the reason and remove that.

Mouth breathing is one cause, also poisons are brought to the mouth from distant areas, the most important being that ruled over by the large intestines. Particularly the condition is due to unrelieved constipation. The gums become inflamed and septic.

The lecturer strongly advocated the removal of the tonsils (which ought not to exist in the adult) in the case of nurses. They should see to it that no such vulnerable point is left in the mouth.

THE TONGUE.—It was quite a good plan to observe the tongue each day. A furred tongue was often an indication that some simple remedy was required.

The lecturer offered a word of warning to nurses as to the control of the tongue. Families and households had been broken up by the innocent chatter of a nurse. They should never talk to their patients about former cases, and Matrons and Sisters should warn nurses about this, especially at present, when a lot of people are, for the time being, doing nursing who do not feel their responsibility to the nursing profession in this respect.

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