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THE HYGIENE OF THE MIND.

SUMMARY OF LECTURE GIVEN BEFORE THE ASSOCIATION OF TRAINED NURSES IN PUBLIC HEALTH BY MISS ISABEL MACDONALD, SECRETARY OF THE ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION, AT 10, ORCHARD STREET, W., FEBRUARY 28TH.

The Lecturer, in commencing, said that she would not enter upon the subject of the effects of fresh air, food, &c., upon the healthy functioning of the mind, as her audience knew probably more of this than she did.

THE NURSE'S NERVOUS SYSTEM.

Referring to sleep the lecturer said:—

"My attention is drawn to this in particular because I see how very frequently nurses in private work curtail their hours of sleep, and account it a virtue to do so. I think you will agree with me that it is more often the nurses' nervous system that is overstrained than their physical—that the condition of the brain and nervous system exercises a wonderful influence upon the physical. When a nurse or any other worker begins to curtail the hours of sleep it may almost always be assumed that she is not capable of the output required of her, and it invariably follows that she loses her self-control, or at least loses a healthy, sane outlook upon the facts and duties of life as they exist. All too often, owing to the curtailment of her hours of sleep, she becomes, to a certain extent, a vampire upon the vitality of others whose lot it is to work with her. It is only in sleep that she can collect a sufficient reserve of that finer, higher vitality that is necessary in all branches of a profession such as ours. For the lack of it the nurse's brain is too often apt to become a mass of bad habits leading to loss of self-control, loss of power for clear thinking, for self-dependence, and for any ability to make full use of the powers and possibilities with which nature may have chosen to endow her. This question of balance brings us to another aspect of our subject, and that is the need for finding a proper equilibrium, if I may so express it, not merely as regards work and rest, but for finding the equilibrium in all you undertake. I think Goethe it was who defined evil as "delayed good"—a very philosophic sort of definition, you will allow. I believe, however, that evil is often a superabundance of

good in one particular direction, and I hope it will not be laid to my account that I am fostering selfishness and prejudicing the traditions of our nursing profession when I say that often nurses suffer, and their patients suffer, from the lack of a healthy ability on the part of the nurses to take care of themselves.

TWO CLASSES OF NURSES.

There are really two classes of nurses. You find in one class the nurse who will give of her sympathy, her service, and her strength up to the very limit of her endurance, and, for a time, this works well; she is much beloved, much sought after, but, at last, though her sympathy with the suffering may never fail, she finds herself bankrupt of endurance, and therefore of the power to give service. Her overflowing goodness has wrought evil, for it has prematurely deprived the sick of a woman whose whole aspiration is for their health. Therefore, while I would desire that every nurse should give good measure of her strength and all her skill to her patients, I would still hold that she should observe a certain temperance, too, in the matter of giving, and that often, unnecessarily, a good nurse has taught people the habit of living on the vitality of herself and others—a habit which it is extraordinarily easy to acquire. Then there is the other class of nurse to whom Goethe's definition of evil might better apply—the nurse who, often quite subconsciously, rears up her own defences by curbing unduly her sympathy, by being perpetually on the watch that her patient does not exact more than the pound of flesh, and one of this class too often establishes undesirable characteristics, such as habits of egoism, selfishness, and introspection, habits as hurtful to mind and character as those which result from the poverty of mental and nervous vitality that arises in the nurses of the first class I mentioned.

CONTROL OF THE MIND.

Another feature in mental hygiene is the necessity for acquiring a certain control over the mind, and I do not refer here only to control over the emotions, although such control is right and important; I mean the power to control the mind just as you control certain physical actions. Just cast back your mind over the hours of a single day. Think of the thousand and one ideas, thoughts, and

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