

PROFESSIONAL REVIEW.

"THE PSYCHOLOGY OF NURSING."*

Once or twice in a lifetime there perchance comes to us some message, or example, or book, which reveals to us what has before been obscure, which illuminates what has been dark, which expresses in words our own thoughts, which sets our feet on the road along which we are plodding with renewed hope, with clearer light, with enlarged vision. Such an event is an epoch in the life of an individual, and when it affects not only an individual but a profession it is an epoch in the history of that profession. An epoch-making book, therefore, is "The Psychology of Nursing," by Aileen Cleveland Higgins, A.B., R.N. (Mrs. John Archibald Sinclair, War Relief Superintendent of the Stanford School for Nurses, San Francisco, U.S.A., Instructor in War Emergency Courses in the University of California). No book so notable in the nursing world has been published since Messrs. Putnam's published "A History of Nursing," by Professor M. Adelaide Nutting and Miss L. L. Dock, and, if it has the success it deserves, its influence upon the nursing profession must be profound. There is no book covering the same ground, and it should be regarded as an indispensable text book in every nurse training school.

The author in her foreword writes that "the trained nurse, like *cloisonné*, is made up of many 'precious things.' Virtue upon virtue, gift upon gift, power upon power the ideal nurse possesses. That she must be a psychologist has been recognised since the days of very early nursing.

"In the old Hindu records we read that those caring for the sick should be 'clever in reading the face and understanding the patient,' which is only another way of saying that these nurses should know something of the science of the mind. Vincent de Paul gives in his teachings to the Sisters of Charity many hints of practical psychology—all set forth in the simplest manner so that he might be understood by those nurses whose education was limited. Florence Nightingale gives many illuminating reminders in her writings concerning attention to the mind's laws in nursing. . . . but not until the present day has psychology been given a definite place in the nursing curriculum. . . .

"Nothing complex in psychological learning is needed. Fundamental practical conceptions—old as human nature—are what contribute to professional skill. It is not the purpose of this book to set forth the elements of psychology from A to Z, but, rather, to dwell upon the principles which are the direct concern of the nurse. We shall not get lost in a maze of technical expressions. Nevertheless, let the student not forget that she is studying a science. Alertness of mind, constant analysis,

* G. P. Putnam's Sons, The Knickerbocker Press, 24, Bedford Street, Strand, London, W.C. 15s.

fine discrimination are essential in acquiring a working basis of psychology. Such study should increase tenfold the nurses's interest and efficiency in every phase of her service."

THE PLACE OF PSYCHOLOGY IN NURSING.

The author writes: "When a young woman enters training to become a nurse, her mind is centred, naturally, upon learning how to care for the sick. This skill cannot be acquired, obviously, without the knowledge of certain facts which she expects to learn from the study of various physical sciences." She emphasises that "It is important that the young nurse should realize at once that another science is needed—the science of the mind. The average young woman does not think of psychology as having anything to do with *her*. Psychology, she thinks, is something for the consideration of teachers, or, perhaps, a study to dip into during college. Such a thing as considering the knowledge of this science as a part of her equipment, as part and parcel of her daily life, does not occur to her. A radical change of attitude towards this subject is necessary to the student entering a training school for nurses.

A PERFECT INSTRUMENT OF SERVICE.

"First of all, why does the nurse need psychology for herself?

"Without the study of psychology, the nurse cannot carry out successfully the physical and mental re-education of herself, which is a necessity if she learns to give the highest service in her profession. Difficult though this task of re-education may be, it is fascinating, because it imbues the pupil nurse with a sense of infinite possibility. What may not be accomplished by a human being disciplined and trained to greatest demands? To become 'a perfect instrument of service'—this is worth the struggle of breaking away from ideas and habits that are wrong.

"Usually, the rigid physical examination an applicant undergoes before her acceptance into the training school brings sharply to her mind the fact that good health is essential to the nurse. She should know, as definitely, that health of the mind is to be considered as well as health of the body. She should be willing, not only to train her body to perfect control, to eliminate weaknesses, to achieve co-ordination, but to train her mind as well—to clear it of waste thought, perverted responses, and blind purposes. Indeed, she must realise that the body cannot be developed to its full power without the accompanying discipline of the mind.

"In order to bring about the re-education of body and mind the nurse must be able to judge what making over is necessary for herself. In other words, she needs to become an intelligent, impersonal self-critic. All the willingness in the world to become an ideal nurse will not take the place of a practical knowledge of how to go about re-education. It is not enough to see one's own faults and deficiencies; they must be understood as well. Faults and deficiencies that are analysed

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)