

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGY? WHY IS A KNOWLEDGE OF IT NECESSARY TO THE NURSE (1) FOR THE PATIENT'S SAKE, (2) FOR HER OWN SAKE?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize for last week to Miss M. M. G. Bielby, Cranford, Middlesex.

PRIZE PAPER.

Psychology is the science which explains the laws governing the mind, and the relation of thought to the other two departments of human nature—feeling and action. It enables the student to obey the behest, Know Thyself; to see how all thoughts tend to become actions, and to understand the influences in operation between mind and body.

A knowledge of psychology is necessary for the patient's sake, because without it a nurse may well spend half a lifetime in acquiring empirically that skill in the art of nursing for lack of which her earlier professional work may yield only a tenth of its maximum contribution to the patient's health and comfort. With this knowledge, eyes and hands become the dexterous servants of the trained mind; it makes for physical and mental *efficiency*, which has been happily defined as 100 per cent. Psychology ensures the training of the senses, the ground work of efficiency. A nurse with this knowledge spares the patient mental and physical effort; his facial expression will to her make questions unnecessary. His mind, which may be weakened by his malady, will respond to her conscious, positive suggestion. Her interest power will have been developed with the imagination, thus placing at the patient's disposal increased resistance to depression. Her harmonious mentality will ensure for him that psychic atmosphere fortifying to his recuperative powers. Her facility of expression, especially in manual tasks, will obviate for him the strain which the proximity of effort always imposes on a sensitive patient. She will have acquired that serenity and loveliness of mind which result from replacing worrying and unprofitable thoughts with the positive, helpful, benevolent thought which imparts sweetness to the face, and acts as a comfort and tonic to the patient.

A nurse requires a knowledge of psychology for her own sake, because without it she is, to a great extent, working in the dark, and is hampered in a proportionate degree. Psychology illuminates obscure mental processes and enables the life to be guided from within, instead of being bolstered up by outside pressure. It is the basis of all education in the true sense of that word, namely, to draw out the latent abilities. Great psychologists assert

that the average of ability is far higher than is commonly believed. Lack of cultivation is responsible for this belief.

An important step in evolution is taken when the nurse grasps the fact that every action is primarily due to right or wrong thought; that the thoughts can and must be trained to obey the Will; the immortal Self in command of its servants—thought, feeling and action. A parallel case to a practical psychologist is that of an orchestra, the Will being analogous to the conductor, the instrumentalists corresponding to thought, feeling, faculties and voluntary physical actions. Just as a consummate orchestral conductor with perfectly trained musicians evolves effortless harmony, so does the practical nurse-psychologist bring harmonious and effortless services to the sick. Most of us have had experience of an untrained, amateur orchestra with a poor conductor. The analogy still holds good; it resembles the well-meaning but inefficient nurse.

On its mental side psychology enables the nurse to become aware of all her potentialities; to systematise her thinking; to cut out all superfluous effort; to secure the working together of the physical and mental factors, and the harmonising of the feelings and emotions, which are the governing power of the mind; it increases her intellectual riches.

On its physical side psychology teaches the importance of a perfectly trained body as an instrument of service; it leads her to discard all habits, all faults and follies of fashion, which prevent the normal balance of the body or the development and use of every muscle, to which so much avoidable fatigue may be traced.

In brief, the purpose of psychology is to educate the Will. Right thinking and right feeling result in right action and a "completely fashioned Will."

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss Ruth White, Miss M. James, Miss B. Duncan.

Miss Ruth White writes:—"Some knowledge of psychology is necessary to the present-day nurse, who is expected to nurse her patients with intelligence and sympathy, not merely obediently (though the last named is most essential), in order that she may work hand in hand with the doctor, and not, by sheer ignorance, frustrate his efforts to effect a cure."

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

What are the principal complications of pregnancy met with in patients attending antenatal centres, and what treatment have you seen prescribed?

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