

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD

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No. 1,755.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1921.

Vol. LXVII

EDITORIAL.

THE VALUE OF PERSONALITY AND TEMPERAMENT.

"The world's a room of sickness, where each heart
Knows its own anguish and unrest;
The truest wisdom there and noblest art
Is his, who skills of comfort best."

A word of warning was given recently in the report of a Committee on Medical Service published in an American Journal, which stated that "In his passion for arriving at an exact diagnosis the modern physician too often seems to overlook, or has not been taught to value, the little niceties of medical practice, the simple remedies, attention to details, however trivial, the personal touch, which made the physician of a bygone day such a welcome visitor to the sick room."

Well we remember that physician of a bygone day, the atmosphere of strength and comfort he brought with him, his kindness, his goodness. He knew not only his patients, but the members of their families, and took a kindly interest in one and all. When to that is added the exact knowledge of the man of science we get the perfect physician. If we cannot have both, the physician with a "passion for arriving at an exact diagnosis" is undoubtedly the safest attendant, but nothing can compensate us for the fatherly kindness and the personal interest of the old physician, who treated not only the disease, but realised the human needs of his patient.

And this warning may well be taken to heart by nurses. It is right, it is necessary, that we should follow closely in the wake of medical practice, should equip ourselves as perfectly as may be for the scientific and practical side of

our work. But when a nurse enters a sick room the patient, with whom she is to live for a time in such close touch, and for whom she will perform such intimate offices, looks anxiously to see what manner of woman she is. Can he depend on her, rely on her sympathy and kindness in his hours of pain—is she, in fact, a woman of human sympathies, not just a perfect machine?

We cannot urge too insistently on nurses—many of them we know will agree profoundly with us—that throughout the whole of their nursing career they must study their patients as human beings, as well as nurse their illnesses. It is on this side that nurses are often criticised by the public, who are grateful to them for the care they have taken of them.

To fit oneself to go into a house where illness and mental anxiety are enthroned, as the person on whom not only the patient but the members of the household can rely in their trouble, is a high vocation, demanding unselfishness, sympathy, patience, and a painstaking study of humanity in its many types, so that we may know how best to approach its many varieties of types, and what points of contact we shall find with them. There is a type of nurse to whom patients respond as flowers to the sun. She is always in demand, and indeed could be employed several times over. The very definite influence of that nurse as a healing agent must not be overlooked, for the patient, sensing her sympathy and reliability, and the restful atmosphere with which he is surrounded, is at peace, so far as he can be, and that is to put him in the best condition for recovery. A patient who is antagonised by the personality of his nurse, however skilful she may be, is at a very real disadvantage, and it is well that nurses should recognise this fact.

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