

# THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED  
**THE NURSING RECORD**  
EDITED BY MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK, REGISTERED NURSE.

No. 1,791.

SATURDAY, JULY 29, 1922.

Vol. LXIX

## EDITORIAL.

### SANITARY SCIENCE.

"What a dull subject," say some. "What a fascinating subject," say others. It all depends on the point of view, and in our opinion the latter view is right, for sanitary science deals with elementary things—earth, air, fire and water, and of the methods by which they are controlled, and harnessed to the service of mankind. What heroism has been outpoured in securing this control; what epics have been written of the struggle of those who, in the face of difficulties all but insuperable, have gained the mastery of the forces of nature!

To trained nurses the subject is more than fascinating. It is the fundamental basis upon which their art is built, and the only sure foundation. Of what use is it to restore health to typhoid patients if we send them back to a polluted water supply; to think that tetanus can be eradicated while its germ lurks in infected earth; to expect those who live in the slums of great cities to grow up strong and healthy, while day by day, and especially night by night, they breathe air tainted with exhalations from the lungs, with emanations from the bodies of those with whom they live in such close proximity, and from noxious things which are gathered round them in the course of their daily life? Even fire, that supreme purifier, becomes an agent prejudicial to health when great factories belch forth their unconsumed smoke to taint the air, to darken the sunshine, to choke the lungs; and nurses well know that a day of dense fog works havoc in hospitals for diseases of the chest, where patients with overtaxed hearts, and diseased lungs, who need pure air to enable them to carry on at all, give up the struggle and surrender—not primarily to death, but to poisonous conditions, whereby life, in their handicapped state, is rendered impossible.

The Congress of the Royal Sanitary Institute at Bournemouth this week is therefore dealing with subjects of importance to the nursing profession, and we rejoice to know that this will be emphasised by the presence of the

Lady Mayoress of London, a Trained Nurse holding the certificate of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, who is the Hon. President of the Section of Personal and Domestic Hygiene.

The foundation of a nurse's work is war on disease, by prevention as the first line of attack, by cure or amelioration as the second. Included in the first are ante-natal care, the care of infants, of the health of school-children, the sanitation of persons, places and houses, all of which come within the province of the district nurse, including the very important knowledge of the disposal of refuse. The district nurse may also instil into young people a sense of the importance of purity of life, and of the contraction of healthy marriages, and so be a potent factor in raising the standard of health within her sphere of influence.

In the second are included the nursing of all those medical, surgical and gynæcological cases which fill our hospitals, and benefit so greatly by treatment there. Incidentally, surgical nursing gets into its right perspective. The correct dressing of a surgical case, the expert application of bandages, fall into their proper place as only a part—an important part—of a nurse's work, but not to be placed on a pedestal alone, as so many amateur nurses appear to think.

Scrupulous cleanliness must characterise every department of nursing, and is the foundation of the successful warfare on disease-bearing parasites and vermin—fleas, lice, bugs, mosquitos and rats, to name only a few.

Sanitary science teaches us also to make war on war, for war is more cruel in its results than pestilence, inasmuch as pestilence results in the survival of the fittest, whereas war results in the survival of the less fit.

Lastly, do not let us forget the plea put forward by that passionate sanitary reformer, Charles Kingsley, that the tree of knowledge is likewise the tree of life, and that all have a right to some small share in the beauty of this world of ours, and its wonder and its rest, for their own health of soul and body, and for the health of their children after them.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)