

## OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

WHAT IS THE DISTINCTIVE VALUE OF NIGHT-DUTY IN THE SCHEME OF TRAINING FOR NURSES? WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE ADVANTAGES AND THE DRAWBACKS OF NIGHT DUTY?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss M. Ramsey, S.R.N., Enmore Road, South Norwood, S.E.

### PRIZE PAPER.

The distinctive value of night duty in a nurse's training is that she then realises her responsibility far more than on day duty. It is during the night when many serious cases are at their worst, and when the nurse's resources may be taxed to the utmost to procure rest and sleep for her patients.

Night nurses have special opportunities for helping their patients, and when a probationer realises what a great trust night nursing is, this helps to develop her sense of responsibility and powers of observation to a marked degree. The punctual administration of food and medicine; the careful observation of symptoms upon the immediate treatment of which life may depend; the living and the dying are literally left in charge of the night nurse, and are often wholly dependent on her.

*Advantages.*—More opportunities are available on night duty for the good management of the nurse to be of special benefit to her patients. For instance, a nurse can do a great deal when attending to the wants of one patient to prevent the others being disturbed, by using care to prevent sudden noises, with habitually quiet movements, and a quiet way of speaking, will go a long way towards enabling the patients to sleep.

With regard to operation cases, part of the preparation devolves upon the night nurse, and any encouraging remark that can be combined with the necessary attentions may prove more comforting to the patient at this particular time than the nurse herself can fully realise. Just a brief word when leaving the patient in the morning to the effect that she is glad to think his trouble will be over when she comes on duty again that night will not only show her patient that she is sparing a kindly thought for what lies before him, but will inspire him with the conviction that she has confidence in the result of the operation. This in itself may enable him to gather up a little more courage on his own account.

Again, in the usual way night duty does not provide the rush of work as on day duty. This, taken periodically, is a distinct advantage, and occasionally one gets time for a little study during the slack times.

It is a good asset if the night nurse is capable of writing a full, concise, and accurate report of what has happened to her patients during the night, as the doctor will want full particulars when the nurse is off duty.

*Disadvantages.*—If kept on night duty for too long at a stretch one is apt to get run down in health. After all, it is the exception for a nurse to sleep well during the day or to get sufficient sleep, and this is bound to leave its effects, especially when on night duty for three or four months continuously. For highly strung, nervous girls night work must be a great strain. It is a great mistake, for health reasons alone, to appoint permanent night nurses.

In a good many institutions more work has to be got through by night nurses before they go off duty than can reasonably be managed in the time at their disposal, and it is a great temptation to begin at an earlier hour than any patients should be disturbed. Many of these defective arrangements are not within the control of the nurses themselves, but the more she perceives and sympathises with the patient's point of view, the less likely she will be to sacrifice his comfort to spare herself personal inconvenience in other ways. If a nurse remembers that in some cases the only cessation from pain which a patient can hope for is when he is actually asleep, she will realise how very precious sleep becomes to that patient.

One often develops a fastidious appetite on night duty, eating too little and drinking too much tea; also not obtaining sufficient exercise and fresh air before going to bed. The most efficient and most trustworthy workers make the most successful night nurses.

We hope to publish Miss Bielby's paper, as it touches on night nursing by the Private Nurse.

Miss Allbutt wisely lays great stress on the necessity for a nurse on night duty "to be very observant, conscientious, quiet, self-reliant, and accurate in giving a report." She draws attention to the fact that "as time goes on, on night duty, one feels the extreme weariness and the craving for rest at night, and that there may be a tendency to become slack in appearance. Such habits as wearing bedroom slippers, and taking off cap and collar, should be forbidden."

Miss K. Matthews writes:—"The nurse's sense of duty in details is taxed very heavily on night duty, and should bring out her highest qualities. She has to continually practise self-control in order to meet emergencies, and this fits her for further responsibility later on."

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