

FAITH HEALING.

I once asked a doctor to give my patient something to relieve a distressing pain. He answered, "Sister, I am surprised that you should ask for medicine, knowing perfectly well that it is only faith that cures, and not drugs." Some days later the baby had hiccoughs when he called. "Sister, why don't you give that poor suffering infant some dill water?" "Why should I? He has no faith in dill water, and you know it is only faith that cures."

I thought of that doctor when I watched a woman in San Sophia, Constantinople. In that Mosque, which was once a Christian Basilica, is a column said to have been brought from Jerusalem; on the base of this column is a painting or carving of the Christ. The Moslems, unable to obliterate the portrait when they turned the Basilica into a mosque, sheathed it in copper; there is now a hole in the copper, said to be over the eyes of Christ, and Moslems, through faith in Christ—who, to them, is only a dead prophet—find relief from their sufferings by touching those eyes of stone. Once I watched a woman with a tiny baby, evidently very ill, put her finger into the hole, then touch the baby's face. The child was too young to have faith in anything, but the mother had faith enough for both. To come nearer home, I once knew a learned professor who carried a raw potato in his pocket to safeguard him from rheumatism. What faith! I have known a number of people who wore a violin string tied round their waists to cure lumbago (next to the skin, of course); not like an old man I had in hospital, who wanted to have his poultice on the top of his nightshirt, because he had always had them, from his childhood, applied in that manner. Messy old man! but he had great faith—the poultice would surely do him good. How often we hear a patient say, "I like Dr. So-and-so, he always does me good, I have such faith in him"; and they are right, he does do them good; it is their faith; if they had no faith in him, it would be difficult for him to help them at all.

Once, in a crowded street in old Cairo, I watched a woman who, veiled to the eyes, still looked terribly ill; she staggered, rather than walked, to the old gate called Bab-el-Zuwela, and, with a sigh, clung to it. The crowd passed on, taking no notice of the apparently dying woman; why should they? They knew that, hundreds of years ago, a very holy man lived in the house over the gate; he was so holy that, even after all these years, the gates are believed to possess miraculous virtues, because, in his lifetime, he sat in the gateway and healed the sick. I hope her faith brought her relief. I wished I could speak to her, but I knew no Arabic. I asked a friend with whom I was exploring old Cairo to speak to her, and offer to take her home.

"My goodness, no! We English are not popular in this quarter; it would take more than your faith in old Zuwela to save you from the mob if you interfere; you have stared at her too long as it is, we had better fade away," so we faded.

M. H.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE WELFARE OF THE BLIND.

In view of the development in the work among the Blind owing to the operation of the Blind Persons Act, 1920, the Minister of Health has re-appointed the Advisory Committee on the Welfare of the Blind for a further period of office.

The Committee will advise the Minister on matters relating to the care and supervision of the blind, including any question that may be specially referred to them by the Minister. Mr. F. M. Chapman, of the Ministry of Health, will act as Secretary.

THE NURSING SERVICE IN COUNTY AND BOROUGH MENTAL HOSPITALS.

REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY THE BOARD OF CONTROL TO INQUIRE INTO THE NURSING SERVICE IN COUNTY AND BOROUGH MENTAL HOSPITALS.

A most important report has been drawn up by the Committee on Nursing in County and Borough Mental Hospitals appointed to inquire into the Nursing Service in County and Borough Mental Hospitals, and presented to the Chairman and Commissioners of the Board of Control.

The Committee, of which Dr. C. Hubert Bond, C.B.E., D.Sc., F.R.C.P., Commissioner of the Board of Control was chairman, was appointed on March 22nd, 1922, by that Board, with the approval of the Minister of Health.

"To consider the Nursing Service in County and Borough Mental Hospitals, and in what directions it can be improved."

In addition to the Chairman, the Committee included Dr. G. F. Barham, M.A., Medical Superintendent County of London (Claybury) Mental Hospital. Dr. Wolseley-Lewis, F.R.C.S., Medical Superintendent of the County of Kent (Maidstone) Mental Hospital, Miss M. M. Thorburn, R.R.C., Matron of the County of London (Horton) Mental Hospital, Mrs. Edith How-Martyn, M.Sc., A.R.C.Sc., ex-Chairman of the Visiting Committee of the County of Middlesex (Wandsworth) Mental Hospital, E. A. Medus, Esq., Chairman of the Visiting Committee of the County of Surrey (Netherne) Mental Hospital, Mrs. Hume Pinsent, M.A., Commissioner Board of Control, Dame Louise Gilbert Samuel, D.B.E., Member of the Chelsea Borough Council, E. Sanger, Esq., Chairman of the County of London (Maudsley) Hospital Sub-Committee, Member of the London County Council.

As desired by the Minister of Health, they also carefully considered the following further reference transmitted to them:—

"That the Departmental Committee on the Nursing Service should be asked to consider the following suggestions:—

"(a) Some distinction should be made between the two nursing duties, namely, nursing proper and social duties; that the hours devoted to the former should be relatively few, but that more time should be given to the latter; and that the present rigid system involving short shifts of duty should be discontinued.

"(b) The mental nursing service requires co-ordination with the general body of nursing, and steps should be taken to attract a better class of probationer, particularly in the case of female nurses.

"(c) Every institution should have at least one fully qualified hospital nurse on its staff."

The Committee report that much detailed information of importance has been gathered by letters of inquiry and questionnaires addressed to Medical Superintendents of County and Borough Mental Hospitals, and to matrons of a number of general hospitals. They also invited nurses, male or female, to forward a communication to the Chairman of the Nursing Service Committee.

Some Guiding Principles.

The Committee found themselves unanimously agreed upon the following principles:—

"(a) That, in the treatment of mental disorders, skilled, tactful and kindly nursing is at least as essential as in the nursing of any form of illness.

"(b) That the quality and standard of nursing required demands adequate training, without which it is undesirable that anyone should be placed in charge of a ward for mental disease.

"(c) That to obtain this training systematic instruction, theoretical as well as practical, by qualified teachers, is essential.

"(d) That a good training requires not only adequate arrangements but also a wide field of clinical experience, the realisation of which may entail mutual co-operation between hospitals.

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