

## ELEMENTARY PSYCHOLOGY AND ITS APPLICATION TO NURSING.

A Course of Lectures to the British College of Nurses.

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Resumé of the Month's Lectures.

### Lecture II.

FEBRUARY 21ST.

Continuing his course of lectures on Elementary Psychology, Dr. Forsythe devoted his next talk to the subject of *Instinctive Behaviour*. It was pointed out that whilst in human beings the instincts held a subsidiary position, owing to the factor of intelligence being placed in supreme control, nevertheless in disease and in other regressive states, when the supreme control became weakened, instinctive behaviour once more made its appearance. Emphasis was made that, in spite of the normal modification of instincts in human beings, their effects were constantly to be observed during life. That instincts served two purposes in life was obvious. For survival, self-preservation and race-preservation were essential. It was possible to place all the separate instinctive tendencies under one of the two general categories. The subject of skilled action was then introduced and differentiated from the foregoing. The instincts were remnants of racial history; the skills were relics of individual history. A knowledge of racial behaviour enabled us to understand people and predict behaviour. Such a knowledge was therefore of prime importance to the nurse.

The threefold aspect of instinct was then discussed, and in describing the particular instinctive tendencies according to McDougall's interpretation, stress was laid upon the cognitive, affective and conative aspects in turn. The lecturer concluded by pointing out various ways in which the nurse may turn into good use, from a therapeutic and recuperational standpoint, the natural tendencies any patient may possess.

### Lecture III.

FEBRUARY 28TH.

The theme of this lecture was based upon the subject of *Sensation*. The lecturer apologised for the necessity of introducing his subject by brief anatomical and physiological considerations; but this, he said, served merely to indicate how utterly impossible it was to divorce one science from another.

After a short description of the various sensory types, it was stated that a single simple sensation was impossible to anybody. All our conscious lives we were experiencing the effects of multiple sensations impinging upon us, and this experience, in fact, constituted consciousness. Remove our sensations and we become unconscious. Referring to the psychological aspects of sight and hearing, the opinion was expressed that not enough use was made of them therapeutically, more especially with regard to mental patients. The lecturer read extracts from translations of Greek historians, describing the way in which neurotic and other patients were treated by music and by being placed in beautiful surroundings.

Some time was devoted to the subject of the organic sensations and it was pointed out that many of the symptoms of neurotic patients arose from that source.

Perception was next dealt with and the lecture concluded by a demonstration of the relation of perception to illusions and hallucinations, both of which were described in some detail.

### Lecture IV.

MARCH 6TH.

In introducing the subject of the "*Association of Ideas*," it was pointed out that the characteristic of man's brain

was its power of imagination, thinking, and reasoning. There were two types of individual in the world, speaking generally, the imaginative and the unimaginative. To the former group belonged the Listers, Turners, Irvings—all the artists and thinkers, in fact; to the latter belonged the ordinary man in the street who never achieves distinction. A demonstration of controlled association was effected by the class and the underlying principles of the laws of association explained. Turning to the psycho-pathological side of the subject, the lecturer described the "flight of ideas" as it is seen in states of acute excitement. The incoherence of a patient suffering from acute mania was explained on this basis. The value of free association as a means of investigation of certain abnormal mental states was stressed, and a brief review of the process of psychological analysis was given.

The second part of the lecture was devoted to attention and fatigue. After a short description of the prominent theories of these processes, the lecturer suggested a few ways by which attention to one's subject is best achieved and fatigue stemmed until the task is completed.

### Lecture V.

MARCH 13TH.

"*Habit and its Value in the Learning Processes*" was chosen as the title for this lecture. The necessity of the study of habit to the child-psychologist was stressed. The word "habit" was often misused in a popular manner. The psychological meaning was something more than that which is usually associated with the word. Habit has to be contrasted with instinct. The latter is inherited and common to everybody; the former is a type of behaviour or thought which is peculiar to the individual himself and is acquired by him during his lifetime. Habit formation may be grouped into those of (a) co-ordination, upon which the skilled athletes depend; (b) correlation—reading was an example of this; (c) association—in this way different people come to regard a particular incident from different points of view. The values and uses of habit to the individual were pointed out—their bad effects noted. Reference was made to habit formation in soldiers during the war and an illuminating extract was taken from Mottam's "Spanish Farm" to illustrate this.

Progress in learning was then dealt with, and mention was made of the applied psychological methods adopted in finding out the various rates of learning. These were illustrated by charts. It was stated that the best way to learn was the lazy man's way. Frequent rests were indicated, whatever the nature of the study may be. Habits of skill and thinking were cultivated more easily when there was some incentive for doing so. An appeal to the pride of accomplishment was usually sufficient to spur the nurse on to success. From the patient's point of view, perhaps, the strongest incentive was to learn something useful; this provides the solution why patients progress more rapidly when they are given constructive work to do during re-educational therapy, rather than gymnastic exercises which lack the great factor of interest.

### Lecture VI.

MARCH 20TH.

"*Memory and Its Disorders*."

At the commencement of this lecture, allusion was made to the areas of cerebral localisation, and emphasis was laid upon the fact that the storehouses of various sensory impressions reaching the brain *via* the optic, auditory and other nerves, were the areas of perception or "psychic" areas surrounding the actual receptive zones in their various situations in the cerebral cortex. Adverting to the psychological aspect of Memory, the four main processes of Registration, Retention, Recall and Recognition were out-

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