

BLIND BABY'S MOTHER.

ADVICE BY THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE BLIND.

Problems of Early Training.

To help the mother of a blind baby in her difficult task of bringing up the child satisfactorily, the National Institute for the Blind has issued a special bulletin (N.I.B. Bulletins, No. 6), for her guidance. The Bulletin, "The Care of the Blind Baby," is intended for those cases where the baby, instead of being sent to a Sunshine Home, is reared at home. It is published by the National Institute for the Blind, 224-228, Great Portland Street, London, W.1, price 3d.

Dr. Eric Pritchard (Consulting Physician to the National Institute), who contributes the introduction, writes: "However intelligent and however self-sacrificing the mothers of these children may be, the task of successfully bringing them up is a very difficult one, and in order to help them the various experiences gained by those who have had the care of blind children in the Sunshine Homes and elsewhere have been pooled, and the compilation of this little leaflet has thus been rendered possible.

"The plight of the child who is blind from babyhood is one which must surely move profoundly every compassionate person; the one upon whom darkness descends later in life—sore as his affliction is—has at least the consolation of memory, and can picture, more or less vividly, beauty in nature and art when carefully explained to him; but never to have seen the loveliness of colour and form, the majesty of mountains and rivers, the sunlit seas, or the sheets of golden gorse and purple heather which clothe our commons and hill-sides at their appointed season, are deprivations which must make the heart of every true mother ache well nigh to breaking for the child that she has borne, as she realises the extent of its loss. Nothing that she can do will be too much to minimise his grievous handicap.

"Teachers in schools for the blind tell us that parents of children admitted to such schools generally fall into one of three classes.

"There are, first of all, those who think that so long as their baby is properly fed, clothed and kept clean, their duty towards him is finished. They neglect his mental development, talking to him very little, leaving him for long hours in his cot or perambulator, and sometimes even looking upon him rather as a burden.

"Then secondly, and quite at the other end of the scale, there are those mothers who are genuinely devoted to their child, but who are nervous of letting him do anything for himself because of his blindness.

"Lastly, there are those sensible mothers who love their baby and are never in the least neglectful of him, but who realise that the truest kindness is to train their little child almost from the beginning to help himself."

Though, apart from the sense of sight, blind babies and seeing babies are physically and mentally the same, unexpected differences occur in behaviour. It has been observed, for example, that many blind children do not crawl before they begin to walk. Things beyond their reach have at that stage no attraction for them.

Picture books mean nothing to the blind child; but it is normal in its love for the jingle of nursery rhymes. The mother is recommended to pay particular attention to those with action, such as "Pat-a-cake" and "Ride a Cock-horse."

A blind child is inclined to develop mannerisms unknown among sighted children: holding the head down, pushing out a foot to feel the way when walking, and so on. Such mannerisms, which must be carefully checked, are generally due to lack of confidence.

The Bulletin to which we have drawn attention gives practical hints as to the training of blind babies, the importance of early training and patience in training, of developing the senses of hearing, touch and smell, and of teaching self-confidence.

We cordially commend the Bulletin to trained nurses and to all who are brought in contact with blind babies.

NIGHTINGALEIANA.

Miss Elizabeth Wilson, of Preston, a member of the British College of Nurses, sent us recently a copy of a letter addressed by Miss Florence Nightingale in 1886 to the then Mayor of Walsall, Mr. Thomas Evans, who had invited her to unveil the Statue of Sister Dora. This is a beautiful letter and alas! failing the original, the copy will be carefully filed with original letters possessed by the British College of Nurses.

September 27th, 1886.

TO THE MAYOR OF WALSALL.

DEAR SIR,—I would fain say what I cannot say, how deeply touched I am by the feeling of your town that I should unveil the statue of your own honoured Sister Dora—of the world's honoured Sister Dora; and would you kindly tell them so, as well as my deep regret that overworked and a prisoner from illness for years—as you favoured me by calling upon me—I cannot answer to your call. The noble tribute which you are raising to her memory—that memory, nevertheless, more everlasting than stone or marble—deserves the thanks of all who would see a noble life honoured. But I especially would thank you in the name of all us nurses, who long to see the high motives such as hers, the love of God and our neighbour, become the true life of us all, leading us to seek ever improved skill to do the work better.

May the lesson which you are generously giving us bear fruit, till every nurse, though not gifted with Sister Dora's wonderful capacities, recognises her true mission, in humility and self-devotion, to grow in training and care of her patients, so that she may be one for her Master's use, not only for their bodies, but for their spirits, that none but may be better for her care, whether for life or death. And may she remember, too, courage and obedience; and also that men patients especially are critical of religion nowadays, and look sharp to see if she is acting up to her profession. Such are some of the lessons taught by Sister Dora's life. May we lay them to heart. And to the noble rough fellows, the workmen round Walsall, who so loved her, may I send my heartfelt greetings? You have doubtless no difficulty in choosing another for such an honourable office as the unveiling, but my brother-in-law, Sir Harry Verney, bids me say that, should you wish it, he would feel himself favoured by being the one.

Pray believe me, Sir,

Ever your faithful Servant,

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

SISTER DORA'S SOUVENIRS.

Having received so much courtesy and kindness from the Mayors of Walsall, the Council of the British College of Nurses ventured to ask for some photographs, &c. of the Souvenirs of Sister Dora, preserved in the Free Library and Art Gallery, at Walsall.

In their generous response we have received valuable literature and beautiful photographs, some of which we shall hope to reproduce in our next issue and give more detail, and in the meantime we wish to record our great appreciation of this kindness.

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