

## WHAT THE SOCIAL WORKER EXPECTS OF THE NURSE.\*

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The social worker counts on getting immediate and highly skilled service for her clients from the community nurse whether she represents the schools, the visiting nurse association or the health department.

But the social worker asks of the nurse an even greater contribution in a non-medical field. I would like to confine myself to this one point.

There really is no such creature as a typical individual. But out of the mass of things that make up the daily routine of human beings, certain experiences stand out as common to all. For example: We observe typical reactions to the various crises of life—particularly the crises of birth, of illness, of death. The play of emotions surrounding these crises is much the same to-day under our highly developed civilization as it was among primitive tribes. Science has substituted a programme of prenatal care for the old pregnancy taboos, black magic and superstitious quarantine of mothers. Skilled medical and nursing care have vanquished the "evil spirits" which produced the high mortality among savages as judged by the large number of skeletons of newly-born babies found in archæological excavations. Surgery, medication and hygiene have triumphed over the ancient devils which invariably turned sickness into death. But in spite of the control now exercised over these crucial experiences, they are even now identified with life's greatest emotional heights and depths.

Birth, illness, the threat of death charge the atmosphere with emotional waves—of joy, fear, pain, sorrow, insecurity, jealousy, resentment, great affection, sacrifice, or loyalty. Every phase of living is intensified; every word or act is of a significance which stands out in bold relief as compared with the tone and colour of everyday events.

By virtue of her profession the nurse enters the life of others at these critical periods to contribute her skill and service. Because she brings hope and security, emotions are laid bare. She may look into the deeper recesses of mind and soul that are ordinarily closed even to those who are nearest. *The use the nurse makes of these associations is of vital importance to the social worker.*

Her understanding of the significance of these emotional revelations may bring to the family a richer gift than physical health. Her lack of understanding may leave a scar on the family life. Let me illustrate:

The ninth child was born to a family receiving relief. This child was not wanted; was deeply resented by both parents. The mother turned away from it and refused to nurse it; the father was in despair.

The nurse exclaimed over the size and fine condition of the child. She displayed pride in him as the largest baby she had ever handled. She called every one's attention to this wonderful boy. In a few days all resentment had left the parents. They, too, began to show pride. They quoted the nurse.

Suppose this nurse, though she may have felt it, had agreed with the parents that the birth of this child was to be deplored? Any social worker who struggles with delinquent children and maladjusted adults knows how often their problems are traced directly to the reaction towards an unwanted child. This nurse might have strengthened the parents' rejection of this child and left behind her a baby starving for love, parents burdened with

a sense of guilt towards the child and resentment towards life—a rolling snowball of a social problem.

The social worker wants the nurse to be as alert to the importance of family relationships or unusual attitudes, as she is to the changes in temperature and pulse.

By her very personality and intelligence the nurse treats the area outside of her medical province. She cannot avoid it. She enters a realm of highly sensitised emotions. She affects every family worker with whom she comes in contact—by her appearance, her manner, her speech. Often her very silence conveys meaning. Her faltering may incite fear. Her calmness brings new hope.

Because of these things the social worker believes the nurse is one of the greatest social forces in the community and her indispensable ally in developing the art of living.

More power to her!

*From "Public Health Nursing."*

## THE KENT COUNTY MENTAL HOSPITAL, MAIDSTONE.

### A PROSPECTUS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL INTEREST.

The Kent County Mental Hospital, Maidstone, has a high reputation in the nursing world for the efficiency of its training school in mental nursing, and for the high standards which it sets before those desiring to enter it as pupils. The very attractive illustrated prospectus issued under the authority of the Medical Superintendent (Dr. Allen C. Hancock, M.C., B.S., D.P.H., D.P.M.), and the Matron (Miss E. L. Macaulay, O.B.E., R.R.C., S.R.N., R.M.N.), for the guidance of nurses entering the service, puts before them plainly the obligations as well as the interests of the profession which they propose to adopt.

"There is," we read, "probably no profession which offers a life full of such psychological interest, of such helpfulness to humanity, and which has such a strong appeal to all that is best in woman, as does this particular branch of the Nursing Profession.

"Nursing is the ideal profession for women, but it is of paramount importance that the young woman who contemplates taking up such noble work shall be fully equipped with a sound general knowledge, good education, and the vocation and aptitude for the work she is undertaking. . . .

"Mental Nursing is, without question, the most difficult branch of the Nursing Profession. It is, therefore, specially important that it should attract the highest type of woman: one who realises that to minister successfully to a mind diseased requires high qualities, both natural and acquired."

For all grades in the service the remuneration is good. Probationers commence at a salary of about £50 per annum, rising annually to £74 per annum. On completion of three years' training and obtaining the final certificate in Mental Nursing, they are promoted to Staff Nurse and receive a salary of £86 per annum; and on further promotion to the rank of Charge Nurse, £96 per annum, with board, laundry, uniform, and apartments in the well-appointed and comfortable Nurses' Home, separate from the Hospital.

Nurses specially recommended for promotion on the staff are given facilities to train and obtain the certificate in General Nursing. On completion of her general training the nurse returns in the capacity of Ward Sister with a commencing salary of £120 per annum and the usual residential emoluments.

It will thus be seen that the hospital affords an opportunity both for an interesting work and also for a remunerative occupation, and those who desire a useful sphere of action in congenial surroundings would be well advised to add to their training in general nursing the training in the care of mental diseases provided at the Kent County Mental Hospital, Maidstone, an occupation which for those of the right temperament and vocation is wholly satisfying.

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