

## PROFESSIONAL REVIEW.

### A GENERAL TEXT-BOOK OF NURSING.\*

Those who are already acquainted with other books by Miss Evelyn C. Pearce, Sister-Tutor at the Middlesex Hospital, and more especially with "A Short Encyclopædia for Nurses," will welcome her "General Text-book of Nursing," "A Comprehensive Guide to the Final State Examinations," which cannot fail to be of great value to those who are preparing for the State examinations.

Miss Pearce has many qualifications for the task she has undertaken. In addition to being a State Registered Nurse on the General and Fever parts of the Register, she is a State Certified Midwife, a Masseuse and Medical Gymnast, and holds the Teachers' Certificate, C.S.M.M.G., etc. She is an Examiner for the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, and Examiner in Fever Nursing and Epidemiology for the Diploma in Nursing, London University, and possesses considerable literary gifts.

In her preface, Miss Pearce says: "In writing this book for nurses it has been my endeavour to provide one which is sufficiently comprehensive, to enable the student to find in it the introduction to nursing she needs on entering hospital, a useful book of reference as she works in one department of the hospital or another and the information she requires in order to pass the Hospital and State examinations in the different branches of nursing subjects included in the curriculum."

But such knowledge is a means to an end, that end being the cure and care of the sick. "A nurse who has sufficient imagination and sympathy to consider herself in the position of the patient, and also of his relatives, is the so-called 'born nurse.' More recently she is being described as 'psychologically minded'—which simply means that she is interested and anxious to understand the workings of the human mind, that she is willing to learn how physical suffering reacts on the human mind, disturbing the emotions and the will in such a way that the patient is not normal when he is ill, and that conversely disorders of the mind, including depression, fear and states of anxiety, may produce symptoms of disease, and that she realises that, whatever may be the cause of his illness, the patient is in need of understanding and sympathy and cannot for the time being be treated like a healthy, robust person. A nurse with the gift of making her patients feel at home and free from fear inspires confidence and provides an atmosphere of peace, serenity and security which is so important an adjunct to the relaxation of mind and body necessary for recovery from disease."

As we study a book of this kind we are constantly impressed with the delicate, difficult and responsible duties which have constantly to be performed by nurses, requiring a high degree of intelligence and absolute conscientious devotion to duty in their performance. "That a nurse should be competent is essential, and to attain this it is necessary to aim at perfection in her work, for there are times when a human life may depend on perfection in carrying out some point of technique, or on promptness of decision and action. Work in the operating theatre, for example, calls for a high degree of conscientiousness. However skilled a surgeon may be, the success of his work depends on the careful preparation by theatre sisters and nurses of all the articles he may need. A theatre nurse must be so meticulously careful in practising the known rules of a septic technique that she should be unable to make a mistake."

It is not infrequently thought that nurses become

hardened by the work they are called upon to perform. We agree with the author, who writes: "generosity, such as only those who practise an art can give is necessary in nursing. The woman who desires to be a nurse has come to give, not to gain; but as her interest and knowledge increases her useful busy life will become fuller, her tact and discretion greater, and the happiness that can only be kindled by absorption in the service of others deeper. She requires indomitable courage and a cheerful spirit in the constant watchful care of others she is called upon to practise, and a well-timed smile can have definite therapeutic value. She gets no 'hardening of the heart,' but great increase in sympathy, as her character is developed by the life she lives . . . let the nurse see that her part is to provide, in full measure, the healing touch of human sympathy."

The book contains many wise directions as to the reception and admission of a patient, who should be met with a smiling, courteous dignity, and put at his ease; also as to the observations to be made in the case of a new patient as to his condition.

A chapter is devoted to "The toilet of the patient, bathing adult patients in bed, and in the bathroom." The nurse will bathe a female patient, for a male patient an attendant will be required, unless the Ward Sister considers this is unnecessary, in which case he bathes himself, and, after he has returned to bed, the nurse takes pains to see that he is quite clean, for example, with regard to the umbilicus and his feet particularly. It is also very necessarily enjoined that "the key should be removed from the hot-water tap, so that the patient cannot turn this on, a bell must be within reach of the patient, and it should not be possible for the bathroom door to be locked, though a screen can be placed round the bath for the comfort of the patient."

The bathing of a small infant is also described in detail, and excellent illustrations of the items required for these various toilets illustrate this chapter. Throughout the book, indeed, the illustrations are clear and well printed and add considerably to its value.

The prevention of bedsores is described in detail; but we cannot agree that tow is a suitable material for washing tender emaciated backs, "rubbing fairly vigorously" a "special wash cloth" should be used.

The chapter on "local applications" is excellent and inclusive. Amongst the applications noted is anti-phlogistine, a preparation of clay, and the method of applying heat most common to-day. "The clay contains a number of volatile oils, including methysalicylate, and is supplied ready prepared in tins. The length of time it retains heat as compared with other forms of poultice, and the volatile substances which it contains, renders it a very favourite application, and it has superseded all other forms."

It should be noted in regard to nutrient enemata, which we formerly much used, that these are no longer advocated, as it has quite definitely been stated that the mucous membrane of the lower part of the bowel is only capable of absorbing water, with salts in solution, and small quantities of glucose. The nutrient enemata ordered to-day invariably consist of a 5 per cent. or 10 per cent. solution of glucose.

"The capacity for absorption of fluid by the bowel is made use of in many instances. For purposes of feeding, a solution of glucose is used, in order to allay thirst, plain water may be administered, and, in order to prevent or combat any possible acidosis following an operation, or occurring in the postoperative period, water containing a teaspoonful of sodium bicarbonate to the pint is injected."

It is quite impossible to go into detail on the matter contained in this book; but our readers may be assured

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[previous page](#)

[next page](#)