

THE NURSE IN INDUSTRY.

The economic progress which began in the XIXth century, and continues at the present time at an accelerated pace, has brought in its train many improvements in the methods of production ; industrial undertakings have been multiplied, their organisation has been enlarged and their personnel considerably increased.

At the same time, since the last century, the evolution of hygienic questions has proceeded at an increasing rhythm, and the Red Cross has extended the scope of its different activities to the most varied domains, such as the industrial world, the educational field, etc.

The simultaneous development of industrial enterprises and problems of hygiene has resulted in the creation, within the factories, of social activities, a brief account of which follows.

It has been proved by statistics that the mortality rate is three times higher for the industrial worker than for the agriculturist or others who carry out their tasks in the open air (builders, carpenters, and employees of the postal, telegraph and telephone services). It is in order to find a means of decreasing this very high mortality rate of workers in factories and workshops that an endeavour has been made to improve the health of these workers, and better their working conditions, by entrusting this task to a specially trained nurse.

Such a nurse must be fully trained and have in addition a certain knowledge of social work. If the industrial enterprise is an important one, the nurse must be on permanent duty and be a regular member of the personnel ; if the concern is not large enough to justify the whole time-employment of a nurse, the administrative chief can call upon the services of a visiting nurse in the district, or a nurse who divides her time between several factories and in consequence works on a part-time basis.

The industrial nurse may train for social work either by taking the regular course, which entitles her to a *social nurse's* diploma, or by taking the special courses organised in some countries in universities, which include industrial hygiene in their curriculum. The regular course, lasting from three to four months, which suffices for training in social work, comprises both theoretical and practical work. Only trained nurses may follow the complete course and take the final examinations for the diploma ; the theoretical lessons are open to auditors.

The *theoretical instruction* consists of numerous courses on medical and surgical subjects ; special attention is given to hygiene (maternal and child hygiene, nutrition and mental hygiene), as well as to social problems properly speaking. The latter include social legislation and assistance, the family from the economic point of view, and legal questions connected with the protection of children.

The *practical work* comprises probation-periods in a social hygiene dispensary and in an anti-tuberculous dispensary.

In order to carry out her task efficiently, the nurse must possess certain qualifications, such as good health, initiative, ingenuity, and common-sense ; she must be discreet and able to adapt herself to her surroundings ; in her dealings with the workers she must be strictly impartial, both from the political and religious point of

view. Moreover, it is desirable that the nurse should be familiar with the main characteristics of the different industries where she is called upon to work, as well as the dangers and toxic effects of certain manufacturing processes. Mention might be made, in passing, of the industrial poisonings affecting the kidneys, blood and skin, which are frequent in chemical factories and in the metallurgical and ceramic industries.

Tasks of the Nurse in a Factory.

The principal role of the nurse is to use her knowledge and skill for the benefit of the workers, so that they remain in good health and also in order to improve their health as much as possible. In large industrial enterprises, she is generally responsible for arranging for the medical examination of workers, when they enter employment. To do this, she makes the necessary arrangements either with the local doctor or with the factory's own doctor. In case of an accident, the nurse gives emergency first aid ; if the accident is trivial she does the dressings herself and watches the injuries carefully ; she must change the bandages at the end of the day, so that the workmen, after their shower-bath, return home with clean dressings.

It is important that first aid be given by a competent person, because it often happens that slight injuries develop into septic wounds, which could have been avoided had they been treated in time. When the accident is more serious, the nurse must call in a doctor, whom she assists, if necessary, or else she takes the injured man to a polyclinic or dispensary where he will have the proper care. Every worker has a health-card on which is recorded accidents, sickness, treatments and any information which may be useful from the social point of view.

If the factory has a canteen, the nurse must see that this is clean and well-kept, and supervise the preparation of the food and drink served there ; she must also see that the showers and W.C.s are kept in good working order.

The nurse's very wide field of action may even include giving advice and help to the staff. By making recommendations and suggesting the appropriate measures, the nurse can prevent or check the spread of diseases ; and, in the course of her work, she can help the workers themselves to acquire useful notions of hygiene.

Work of the Nurse Outside the Factory.

When an inquiry has to be made, she visits the homes of the workers, either at the request of the families themselves or on her own initiative, in order to make tactful investigations. A free pass into the hospitals enables her to visit patients at any time of the day, and to follow up their progress. The industrial nurse keeps in close touch with the local medical and welfare services, and is thus able to make arrangements easily for having workers placed in convalescent homes or their children sent to holiday camps. She also gives the workmen's wives good advice on questions of child welfare, family hygiene and care of the sick.

To conclude this brief statement, at the present period, when industry continues to expand from day to day, it would be desirable, in the interests of the working class, that the number of industrial nurses, whose task offers possibilities of work as varied as it is useful, be increased.

Contributed by the League of Red Cross Societies.

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