

**On the education of nurses : an address to the subscribers & friends of the Lying-in hospital, Birmingham / by Jonathan Mason Waddy.**

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ON THE  
EDUCATION OF NURSES :

AN ADDRESS

TO THE

SUBSCRIBERS & FRIENDS OF THE LYING-IN HOSPITAL,  
BIRMINGHAM :

"O male occupatum virorum Genus, occidimur nos, non morimur :  
Et ab illis, qui inter vos peritissimi existimantur, perperam curatæ,  
vos vero de qualibet vel levissima vestrarum affectionum, Libros ex  
libris facientes, Bibliothecas voluminibus oneratas, de nostris inter ea  
diris ac difficillimis cruciatibus, nulla vel exigua et ea quidem satis  
oscitanter mentione factâ."—SORANUS.

BY

JONATHAN MASON WADDY, M. D., LOND. M. R. C. S.

PHYSICIAN ACCOUCHEUR TO THE BIRMINGHAM LYING-IN HOSPITAL,

&c., &c.

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TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE  
THE  
COUNTESS OF DARTMOUTH,  
THE PATRONESS  
OF THE  
LYING-IN HOSPITAL, BIRMINGHAM,  
A LADY,  
WHOSE EXALTED RANK RECEIVES ADDITIONAL DIGNITY  
FROM THE  
URBANITY OF HER MANNERS  
AND  
HER EXTENSIVE CHARITIES,  
WITH HER LADYSHIP'S PERMISSION  
THIS ADDRESS  
IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED  
BY  
HER LADYSHIP'S MOST OBEDIENT AND HUMBLE SERVANT,  
THE AUTHOR.



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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE establishment of a Lying-in Hospital for Birmingham and the Midland Counties, has engaged for many years the attention of the Medical Profession; and various attempts have been made, from time to time, towards its accomplishment.

An Institution specially devoted to obstetric medicine and the diseases of women and children, was established about four years ago, under the auspices of William Mabson, Esq., then High Bailiff of Birmingham; and, since that period, nearly two thousand poor married women have been attended in their confinements, and fifteen hundred sick patients have received medical relief. This unprecedented success, and the numerous



and greatly increasing applications for the benefits of the Charity, attest how highly it is estimated by the poor, whilst the propriety of separate Institutions for obstetric patients is demonstrated by the following fact:—that puerperal fevers, of the most dangerous characters, are constantly arising from the contagion of typhus, erysipelas, and the other eruptive fevers; consequently, a too close approximation of medical, surgical, and obstetrical wards, may lead to great loss of life, and danger to society at large. The truth of these important considerations is fully established by the reports of the Dublin and other Hospitals, and by the writings of Dr. Collins, Dr. Ingleby, the Registrar General, &c., &c.; and in those few Charitable Institutions in which the obstetrical department of medicine is associated with the medical and surgical, it has been found necessary to confine the cases to out-door attendances, or to establish separate wards and a distinct medical staff for the Lying-in department.

This most important branch of medical science has had to struggle with great difficulties; for in England it has scarcely been recognized as a legitimate department of medicine until within the last twelve or fourteen years. Our Medical Colleges considering the practice of midwifery so derogatory to the profession, as to induce them to refuse admittance to the Fellowship of the



College of Physicians, or to the Council of the College of Surgeons, to any gentleman who had practised midwifery.

The result of this vandalism, was, that few medical pupils attended lectures on obstetric subjects, and the evils consequent upon this state of things were so appalling, that in the year 1825, a society was instituted in London for the purpose of promoting obstetrical knowledge, and of protecting the public from the injuries to which they were exposed from the numerous errors committed, and mischiefs produced, by the indiscriminate practice of midwifery.

To an application to the Royal College of Physicians made by this society, the College returned the following reply, dated June 9th, 1826,—stating that “The College was best satisfied when midwifery was practised by those who had been found, on examination before them, to be competent to the exercise of the profession at large by their knowledge and acquirements; that the delivery of women was an act of manual skill, and therefore in the province of surgery; and that the treatment of the diseases of pregnancy and the puerperal state, was a part of the general practice of physic, and, as such, liable to the enquiries of the Censors’ Board.” In a subsequent communication, dated July, 1827, the College informed



the Memorialists, that they considered the examinations entered into at the College a sufficient test of the Candidate's knowledge on those points, and the act of midwifery an operation of a surgical nature.

The Royal College of Surgeons, on February 17, 1827, stated—"That their College was instituted solely for the purpose of examining and attesting the capabilities of persons to practise the art and science of surgery; consequently, being solicitous that those persons who conduct the examinations should be particularly skilled in surgery, the College had excluded from the Court of Examiners those persons whose time and attention had been occupied in practising the obstetric and pharmaceutical departments of medicine—that the Council of their College did not perceive how they could compel, even its own members, to submit to examination in midwifery—that no such Tribunal of Examination, etc., has as yet been instituted, but that the College would willingly form a Board of Examination for the midwifery department of medicine, provided that the Government of the country deemed it necessary and would give them the requisite authority." In a subsequent communication the College contended that by admitting practitioners of midwifery into their Council, they would weaken that respect the public now entertains for, and the confidence it now has in that



Council. They observed, "that hitherto they had admitted as Examiners such surgeons as they believed had, in the early period of their lives, been accustomed to pass their days in Hospitals, and their nights in the study of their profession, and not in the avocations of a Lying-in chamber." They passed a resolution, however, requiring an attendance upon two courses of lectures on midwifery, for each candidate for their Diploma.

The Apothecaries' Company, much to their credit, evinced a strong desire to co-operate with the philanthropic exertions of the obstetric society, and an opinion was obtained from the Attorney and Solicitor General, which was, that "The Court of Examiners of the Apothecaries' Company have no power by the Act of Parliament to examine in midwifery."

It will not, therefore, be a matter of surprise that obstetric medicine is represented in these observations as assuming only its proper rank as a science; and in referring to the recent state of this branch of learning, Dr. Mawbray remarked—But now-a-days "women may well complain that men, in short, study their own good, and take more care of themselves than of the women." Dr. Dewees, observes, "shall the subject of midwifery be a matter of indifference to him, (the physician) who has almost the control of the future comfort and happiness



of, perhaps, an extensive population; and who shall become, as it were, the arbiter of the lives of thousands of individuals? A very loose morality shudders at the idea of a single murder, yet, an ignorant practitioner of midwifery may feel no compunctions of conscience for a hundred."

Mr. Robertson, in a paper published in April last, in the *Edinburgh Surgical Journal*, remarks, that "later than the period mentioned, the treatment of lying-in women in the provinces, whatever it might be amongst the educated in London, was irrational, and in the same degree, destructive to life." Proofs to this effect might be produced, and to any extent multiplied. So injudicious was the treatment of parturient cases, that, Mr. Charles White, of Manchester, who wrote in 1791, states that the mortality was so alarming and notorious, both in the neighbourhood and in distant parts of the country, as to acquire for the fatal disease the name of "*The Manchester Fever*." He observes, the usual plan at that time was to exclude the fresh air from the windows, by shutters, curtains, and blankets; all the crevices in the windows and doors were stopped close, not excepting the keyhole; strong and warm liquors were given; additional clothes put on the bed; the curtains drawn tight, &c., &c. In a communication which Mr. Robertson,



of Manchester, lately received from India—from Modusoodun Gupta—a native practitioner in Calcutta, and Demonstrator of Anatomy in the Medical College there, M. Gupta states, that “the woman after delivery is placed in a small damp room, ill ventilated with one small door only, and no window or opening of the nature of a chimney. This apartment is a temporary hut of mats and bamboo, thatched with straw or grass. From the moment after delivery the doors are closed; wood fires are kindled in different parts of the room; sometimes two, sometimes three, the smoke of which is allowed to find its way through the walls and roof; then, the room is kept at a great heat; it cannot, I think, be below 90 Fahrenheit.” Added to this, spices and hot water are given, whatever may be the state of the mother’s health, &c. The deaths are three or four out of every twenty; whereas, the English mortality is not more than 1 to 172. “I should rejoice” says Mr. Robertson, “also to believe it likely, in any the least degree, to lessen antipathies and prejudices that still linger in high professional places in England against the cultivators of obstetric medicine. Has any branch of the profession, I would ask, made a progress equal to midwifery; or is there any branch besides, which in the walks of practice, and by the instruction imparted at Lying-in Charities to nurses and

female midwives, confers such universal benefits on society?" No persons have ever thought meanly of midwifery, "excepting those who were ignorant of the difficulties to be encountered in its practical pursuit, as well as of the care and safety with which, in the hands of the well-trained accoucher, those difficulties are now overcome."



## A D D R E S S .

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At the Second Annual Meeting of the Governors of the Lying-in Hospital, a reverend gentleman who spoke on that occasion referred to the general incompetency of nurses, and expressed it as his opinion, that an Obstetric Institution in which nurses could receive proper instruction in the management of the sick, and in their moral and relative duties, would confer as great a benefit on the upper classes of society as it would upon the poorer, who are more immediately the objects of its care.

In the appendix to the fifth annual report of births, deaths, and marriages, the Registrar General observes that "though excellent nurses, con-



sidering their education are sometimes met with, medical precepts are too often set at nought by the nurses and old women in attendance, who have peculiar views of their own which they lose no opportunity of announcing and carrying into effect with the best intention in the world, but the worst consequences. Those who have come in contact with midwives and monthly nurses, are well aware that ignorance does not diminish their self-confidence." He further remarks, "after consulting on the subject several medical men in extensive practice, I may state, that the want of good, educated, trustworthy nurses, is felt in the higher circles as well as in the middle ranks of society. The nurse is always present with the patient; the medical man only occasionally. To the nurse is intrusted the administration of remedies; the ventilation of the apartment, the warming, the diet, and a thousand nameless offices on which health and life depend,—how can a nurse, without any knowledge of principles—without sound convictions engrafted on her mind by education, swayed by her feelings and traditional prejudices, be expected to discharge her difficult duty; and would not the medical man be as much assisted by instructed, as his proposals are now thwarted by ignorant nurses?"



Dr. A. T. Thomson, in his treatise on the management of the sick room, makes the following observations:—"When all the arrangements are completed in the sick room, little benefit can be anticipated if a proper nurse be not obtained to render them available to the invalid. I cannot avoid embracing this opportunity of mentioning the great difficulty of procuring properly instructed nurses in this country. It is, indeed, greatly to be lamented, that amongst the numerous improvements which characterize the present era, the females who assume to themselves the character of sick nurses, and are employed as such, are still left to acquire information respecting the important duties which their office demands, from imperfect experience or from accident. We expect that the skill of our medical attendants shall be certified by diplomas and licenses before they are permitted to practise; but we leave their orders to be executed by the ignorant and the prejudiced, who, not only too often fail in performing what they are ordered, but who, with the usual temerity of ignorance, presume to oppose their own opinions to those of the physician. Every female who wishes to act as a sick nurse should be obliged to serve a certain time as an assistant nurse in one of the public Hospitals, and to receive a certificate of her pro-



ficiency before she leaves the establishment. The advantages which the public would derive from a body of nurses educated in this manner, must be obvious to every one who has had opportunities of observing the miserable working of the present system. We should no longer have to lament the neglect of cleanliness; inattention to ventilation and temperature; an obstinate and presumptuous opposition to the orders of the medical practitioner in reference to diet. We should no longer hear of doses of medicine being given hazardous to life, or of patients poisoned by topical applications administered as internal remedies, and of numerous other evils which are now, unhappily, of daily occurrence."

Dr. Bull, makes the following remarks:—  
 "Serious and important are the duties which devolve upon the monthly nurse, and well would it be for English women, if all who undertake this office came from a better educated class of society than they too often do. Ignorance and coarseness of manner are unbearable in a nurse: it is dangerous to have such a person to carry out your measures; while she is, certainly, anything but a fit companion for the patient, who, nevertheless, has almost no other for two or three weeks."

In no case are the results of ignorant prejudices



and vulgar errors so prejudicial and so common as in the nurse, as they often render her unable to fulfil her duties and lead her to wrong opinions and conduct, by which the success of medical treatment is frequently jeopardised; and in many instances the sick have been absolutely lost, through the ignorance, misconception, and inattention of nurses. Medical cures are not cures by miracles; they are rarely instantaneous; and often require the utmost judgment in the practitioner to obviate the natural tendency of disease to end in death; and if his plans of treatment be not faithfully carried out, and the advent of unfavorable symptoms carefully and judiciously obviated by the attendants in the sick room, how can there be any prospect of success? Sudden changes in the intensity of symptoms, and in the character and complications of diseases, are constantly occurring, especially in those maladies which have the greatest tendency to destroy life. These changes demand an amount of intelligence, knowledge, and promptitude of action in the nurse, which, if not exercised, will often lead to a fatal issue; and thus the skill of the most eminent medical men may be rendered unavailing in thousands of cases.

The helplessness of disease may oblige the strongest amongst us to seek for help; and no class



of persons would be of greater service to society than educated well-behaved nurses, as they associate, in times of sickness, with persons of every rank in life, and of every age, from the early period of infancy to the decay of advanced years. How diversified the talents they require ! How great their power of doing good or evil ! How extensive their moral influence ! How advantageous it must be for them, by proper education and mental discipline, to be able to endure patiently the querulous peevishness of some sufferers ; to raise the hopes and cheer the spirits of others ; and, by moral and religious considerations, to fortify the minds of many against the anticipations of sufferings they may have to undergo ! And how necessary it often is to subdue angry and revengeful emotions ; to sustain the confidence of the sick ; and by a thousand nameless acts of kindness and attention, to contribute to the welfare of those entrusted to their care.

The powerful influence which kindness, attention, and sympathy will enable any judicious person to obtain over the sick and suffering is universally known ; and the different churches of the Roman and Protestant faith have wisely instituted orders of voluntary and unpaid nurses, under the titles of Sisters of Charity, of Mercy, &c., who, by their acts of kindness and benevolence, often touch those



chords of the human heart, which perhaps, have not vibrated for years.

“ See the wretch, that long has toss’d  
On the thorny bed of pain ;  
At length repair his vigour lost,  
And breathe, and walk again.  
The meanest flow’ret of the vale,  
The simplest note that swells the gale,  
The common sun, the air, the skies,  
To him are opening Paradise.”

Surely the period cannot be very remote in which some plan of educational training will be devised in connexion with our different charitable institutions, by which an order of nurses will be raised, whose ability in the performance of their duties will be exceeded only by the kindness of manner with which those duties will be performed.

AGE.—A nurse should be of mature age, not younger than twenty-five or thirty, and not older than fifty or fifty-five years. If younger than the ages I have specified, she will be found to be deficient in corporeal strength, and unequal to the fatigue of lifting her patients in and out of bed ; if older than fifty or fifty-five, her physical powers will fail from the natural decline of strength, and from the greater proclivity to disease existing in advanced life. A very young nurse will find it difficult to overcome



the desire after amusement and change, so strongly characteristic of youth; besides, the matronly character, so becoming in a nurse, sits heavily and uneasily on young females, especially if in good health and spirits. On the other hand, the natural irritability of disposition so often manifested at a late period of life, will often render a nurse, above the age I have mentioned, incapable of bearing the caprices of the sick with equanimity of temper. Many of these observations will apply, also, to persons of proper age, but of feeble and delicate habit of body. A nurse should be healthy, active, and strong; of medium stature; a tall person being often very ungainly. She should not be too corpulent, or she will be apt to sleep when she ought to be awake. The faculties of the mind should be perfect; the sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch unimpaired. A nurse who cannot hear well or see well is constantly making mistakes, and is a source of endless trouble and irritation to her employer. Beauty in a nurse is not essential, but good looks are, for we find them generally associated with amiable manners. When the physical and mental energies are enfeebled by sickness, a severe look or unkind expression will often sink deep and rankle in the sensitive mind, and produce depression of spirits and forebodings of evil which



may go far to nullify all medical treatment. Bodily deformities of various kinds will often disqualify a person from fulfilling the duties of a nurse ; so, also, will an offensive breath, cutaneous eruptions, disagreeable habits, &c.

HEALTH.—I have previously mentioned that the health should be good ; this is most important ; for a person who is in bad health cannot possibly attend, with satisfaction, upon another who is not perhaps much worse than herself. I lately visited a lady who nearly lost her life from the inattention of the nurse, who was so wrapt up in the consideration of her own pains, that she was either unaware of, or unable to distinguish the dangerous condition of her patient.

A woman who is troubled with cough, asthma, difficulty of breathing, spasms, convulsions, sick head ache, palpitations, hysteria, rheumatism, piles, lameness, indigestion, &c., is manifestly disqualified ; so, also, are persons of intemperate habits, smokers, excessive snuff takers, and individuals of a low, nervous, melancholic temperament.

MANNERS, &c.—It is of the utmost importance to the comfort of the female attendant and her patient that the nurse should possess a good disposition and kindness of manner ; be devoid of any readiness to take offence at any little petulances



and annoyances she may meet with, and be able, with comfort to herself, to perform any of those unpleasant and menial duties which are occasionally inseparable from her office. Her manners should be quiet and sympathizing to the patient, with sufficient firmness of character to enable her to carry out the recommendations of the physician : a pleasing and gentle manner being more calculated to obtain esteem, and ensure compliance, than all the arguments and authorities in the world.

**DRESS.**—The dress of the nurse should be plain and simple, and such as will not prevent her from performing her duties. The sick chamber is not the place for curls, silks, and the like. Nothing is more inconsistent than a nurse dressed up as a fine lady. Woollen and silk garments, and especially outside ones, are apt to absorb and retain infectious matter ; and should, therefore, not be worn in the sick room, at least in infectious and puerperal diseases.

**MORALS, &c.**—The conversation of the nurse should be free from any impropriety. She is, for weeks, almost the only companion of the sick ; it is, therefore, highly necessary that she should prove herself capable of that refinement of feeling, which will fit her for being almost the sole attendant of the sick lady and her helpless offspring.



Religious principles constitute an essential qualification : none but fools ridicule religion on a sick and dying bed. Self-indulgence is a voluntary failing, and should be studiously avoided. Nothing is more degrading to a female than the free use of intoxicating liquors. In circumstances of ill health, and under the prescription of a physician, they are occasionally of service ; but a common and everyday recourse to intoxicating beverages is highly unbecoming and unnecessary,—debilitating to both body and mind, and will often tend to shorten life as much as it does to debase the character. Snuff taking is an unpleasant, disgusting, and unnecessary self-indulgence, producing a torpid action of the powers of the mind ; and smoking, in a female, is much worse. The narcotising influences I have just referred to, will eventually produce a deterioration of the powers of mind and body, inducing dyspepsia, heaviness, drowsiness, and inability to discharge her duties, &c. A nurse given to these habits ought never to be employed.

A nurse occupies an important relation to her patient and her family. She is, during her engagement, a member of the family, and should so consider herself, for she has entered into an implied contract of servitude, faithfulness, and friendship. The miseries and vagaries of affliction should never



be exposed. The secrets of the family should ever be considered sacred. The rank of the nurse is intermediate between the servants of the establishment and her employer ; and occupying, as she does, the double character of servant and friend, she should never take any part with the menial servants in any factious or disagreeable movement of theirs. It is almost superfluous to say that a nurse should be honest, not only in reference to the property of her employer, but, also, as regards the performance of the duties, for the discharge of which she is generally well paid. She should never impose either on the physician or patient, with respect to the observance of rules, either of medicine, diet, or management. She should never allow her own comforts to interfere with those of the patient ; her motto should always be "Charity suffereth long, and is kind." If she possess a quiet earnestness and firmness of manner, so that she can inspire her patient with confidence in her sympathy and good will, it will be of great advantage both to herself and her patient. A habit of order is also very essential, as without it the sick chamber presents a scene of confusion ; medicines being displaced ; or medicines, food, and various other articles all mixed together in wretched confusion. The nurse should not only be scrupulously



clean in her own person, but she ought, also, to be careful that her patient, the bed linen, and the room, &c., are all equally clean.

EDUCATION.—*The education of nurses* is a matter of great importance. There cannot be a greater difference than that which exists between an educated and an ignorant nurse. The one is a real help to the physician by noting the symptoms and their changes—the operations and effects of medicines, diet, &c.; whereas the other is a most dangerous adjunct to the sick room, and is a source of constant anxiety, as her own prejudices and opinions are often brought into opposition to those of the medical attendant; and by misunderstandings on her part the most serious and fatal errors have been committed—thus, I have known wrong medicines administered through the nurse not being able to read or write. A case occurred to the late Dr. Baillie and Dr. A. T. Thomson of this character. They attended a lady ill of typhus fever. Dr. Thomson says “The attack was terminating so favorably, that a few days after, our patient was able to be in her drawing room; we discontinued our daily visits, and saw her only every third day. Although convalescent, yet she was still taking bark draughts twice a day; and as opium, when administered internally, greatly dis-



turbed the brain, and deranged the digestive organs, an opiate liniment was rubbed every evening along the spine. We had paid our last visit, and having congratulated her husband and family upon her restoration to health, we took our leave. Three hours afterwards I was again hastily summoned; and, on arriving at the house, found my patient a corpse. The agonizing feelings of the family may be more readily conceived than described: the overwhelming grief into which they were plunged was greatly augmented by the reflection that the daughters were, in some degree, the innocent cause of the awful event—an impression which proved nearly fatal to the husband, and fixed upon the daughters a settled melancholy, from which they have never entirely recovered. The fact was this:—the nurse, who was an old servant in the family, could not read; and, consequently, was not trusted to give her mistress her medicines until a few days before her death. Owing to the convalescence which was then established, the young ladies ventured to walk out in the middle of the day, leaving their mother in the charge of the nurse. On the occasion in question, the poor woman had administered the opiate embrocation, instead of the bark draught.” Relations of this sort might be multiplied, if necessary, but there cannot be need of



further arguments to prove the danger of ignorance in nurses.

EXPERIENCE.—The effect of age in confirming the prejudices of ignorance has been observed by almost all authors who have treated upon the philosophy of the mind. To a mind enshrined, and at rest in preconceived opinions, possessing no curious desire to test their validity, and anxious rather to avoid the labour of thinking, as well as that of acting. To such a mind, experience so called may add, without advantage, from year to year all the opportunities of investigation ; for if the book of nature be read only through the light of ignorant prejudices, its truths will be withheld, and will await the inquires of the unprejudiced and anxious seeker after them. Such experience is but the confirmation of ignorance. It requires a certain amount of education, combined with the possession of industry, observation, and memory, to enable a person to benefit by experience ; for it is possible for a nurse to have eyes never fixed attentively on the phenomena brought before her, or she may have no capacity for generalizing the facts she may observe, and thus the few observations she has been able to make may be of no avail to her. It is this power of observation, generalization, and comparison which education bestows,



which is the foundation of knowledge in every rank and condition of life. The mere ability to read and write I have already shown to be absolutely essential. A higher amount of education is, indeed, very desirable in the nurse, as it better fits her for the companionship of the sick, and enables her to discharge her duties with greater prudence and ease to herself. Dr. Brown justly observes, that "The most benevolent of the poor, in situations too in which their benevolence is most strongly excited, as in the sickness of their relatives or friends, and in which they exert themselves to relieve obvious pain with an assiduity of watching and fatigue, after all the ordinary fatigues of the day, that is truly honorable to their tenderness, have yet little foresight of the mere pains of thought; and while in the same situation the rich and better educated, with equal or, perhaps, even with less benevolence of intention, carefully avoid the introduction of any subject which might suggest indirectly to the sufferer the melancholy images of parting life; the conversation of the poor around the bed of their sick friend is such as can scarcely fail to present to him every moment, not the probability, merely, but almost the certainty of approaching death. It is impossible to be present in these



two situations without remarking the benefit of a little knowledge of the human mind, without which, far from fulfilling its real wishes, benevolence itself may be the most cruel of torturers."

True education, in one word, may be said to be the art of producing the greatest amount of happiness which can be produced by exciting such ideas in the minds of those with whom we converse, as will afford the highest amount of pleasure and gratification, and avert as much as possible every idea which may give rise to uneasiness.—The educated nurse will acquire from experience an aptitude of observation which will enable her to detect any changes in the progress or character of the disease which may arise during the absence of the medical attendant; and these changes are so frequently occurring, rendering necessary a variation in the treatment and general management, that an intelligent and judicious nurse is often of incalculable advantage in the treatment of the sick.

In the management of the sick, the disposition and temper of the patient should be studied, and must be studied in many cases, if success is to crown the efforts of the physician and his assistants. An irritable person will require a different mode of treatment from that which a mild submissive



one will do. The extreme irritability of the former, if excited to passionate feeling, may increase the nervous excitability and add fuel to the disease; whilst an individual of a mild and gentle disposition, under improper treatment, may acquire a morbid sensitiveness sometimes attended with considerable danger. Thus there is great necessity for caution and judgment in these cases, or all remedial agencies may fail in effecting a cure; and great care is required to combine all the efficiency of proper management with that degree of influence which should always be maintained by the attendants upon the sick. The habit of attention is but little cultivated in the lower ranks of life, and, as Dr. Thomson observes, "Thousands pass from the cradle to the grave without seeing, correctly, a single object which passes before them;" but when the power of attention is once secured, no operation of the mind is so much strengthened by its exercise.

A well-educated nurse is far more highly estimated by the invalid, than an ignorant one. Ignorance, inattention, and presumption, will not only destroy the confidence of the patient in the ability of the nurse, but may also destroy the patient's hope in the success of the treatment; and, on the contrary, where the mind of the sick



person is naturally weak, or has been rendered so by the effects of disease, how often it is found that the influence of an uneducated nurse is attended with the most injurious consequences. Thus the patient's confidence in his medical man, however qualified and judicious he may be, is frequently destroyed by unreasonable doubts and questionings; and the anxiety of the patient, and his or her misguided friends or attendants, may lead him to seek for assistance from empirical sources, until the powers of the constitution be finally reduced to such a state as to preclude all hope from any means of relief which medical art can afford.

MEDICAL EDUCATION OF THE NURSE.—On the medical education of the nurse, I shall make a few observations. A nurse should be instructed in the general laws of health and disease; or how can she be so entrusted with the care of the sick with any hope that her instrumentality can be safe and effective? She should be informed of the mode of operation of some remedies of great power, as mercury, iodine, opium, &c.; the mode of applying leeches with the means of arresting consequent hæmorrhage from the leech bites; the different methods of preparing mustard, fermented, linseed, and other poultices and fomentations, with



the rules for their application; the administration of injections; the use of the different sorts of baths—the hot air bath, the hot bath, the tepid and cold baths, shower baths; stuping, sponging, and frictions, with and without stimulating substances. She should also be well acquainted with the proper management of blisters, setons, issues, moxas, and the various counter irritants; the application of dry-heat, hot bricks, water bottles, stomach plates, &c.;\* the proper modes of applying bandages to the legs, abdomen, &c.; the preparation and use of inhalations, fumigations, and the various disinfecting agencies; the rules of ventilation, clothing, diet, temperature, &c.; and lastly, the cookery for the sick and convalescent.

All these acquirements are essential to a well-educated nurse for the sick, and are equally so to the monthly nurse, by whom a still more extended range of information is required. Such as a knowledge of the ordinary signs of pregnancy; the modes of reckoning; the symptoms of miscarriage, and of approaching labour; the management of the room; the management of the month; and

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\* Some years ago I was requested to visit a patient to whose feet hot bricks had been injudiciously applied in a case of coma, from the heat of which the heels and the soles of the feet had been so much burned that she did not recover for several months.



the requirements of the infant, as to diet, clothing, and sleep.

Some years ago I was requested to visit an infant, for whom a nurse had obtained a calomel powder from a neighbouring chemist; the child died from the effects of excessive salivation, under which, parts of the jaw had exfoliated. On another occasion, I remember being suddenly summoned to a case of twins, to whom the nurse had given what she termed "syrup of violets;" they were both asphyxiated by it.

Similar cases might be multiplied without end, as they occur in the practice of almost every medical man; but sufficient has been said to convince the reader of the imperative necessity for better educated nurses than many of those we have at present.

It is an acknowledged principle that charity is not without its reward even in this life, for the good effected by institutions established for the reception and medical treatment of the sick, does not terminate with them, but is of equal advantage to the wealthier classes of society, by affording to the attendants upon the patients in these institutions those opportunities of observation and instruction, and of acquiring manual dexterity which will enable them more efficiently to discharge their



duties to the sick of all classes. In private practice the opportunities of observation are limited; the authority of the medical adviser uncertain; and the fulfilment of his directions is constantly liable to be interfered with, either by the patient herself, or her friends and attendants; the medicines prescribed, the diet recommended, and the other injunctions of the physician, but imperfectly and partially attended to; and in numerous instances, these injudicious interferences have destroyed every chance of success in the medical treatment.

It is to Public Medical Institutions for the relief of the sick, that society must alone look for those means of continuous observation, by which the nature of disease, the phenomena of its progress, its changes and complications, its tendency to terminate in a restoration to health or in death, the effects of remedies, management, rest, abstinence, ventilation, and various other remedial means, can be properly investigated.

The opportunities for obtaining knowledge, are in private practice, exceedingly limited. There are but few cases in which the visits of pupils are allowed; and still fewer in which oral teaching, so essential to the education of pupils and nurses, can be permitted. Public Medical Charities



are, therefore, invaluable in an educational point of view, and it is a duty incumbent upon the medical officers attached to them, to render them available for the purposes of instruction. Any man who holds such appointments, with a view merely to his own interest, is unworthy of his position.

### CONCLUSION.

The statements and observations already made, will be amply sufficient to convince an enlightened and benevolent public, of the necessity for supporting and establishing the Lying-in-Hospital in Birmingham, on such a plan of efficiency and completeness, as will enable the governors to take into the house a sufficient number of obstetric cases, and of persons suffering under the diseases peculiar to women and children, so, that these objects of misery and wretchedness, may not only experience all the benefits which this admirable Institution is able to confer upon them, but may also supply the means of observation and oral teaching to nurses and others in the all-important duties connected with the management of the sick.

When we consider the annual mortality of women in child-bed, according to the report of



the Registrar General, to be about three thousand, and the deaths of children during the first month to be thirteen thousand boys, and ten thousand girls, it cannot be an object below the attention of the philanthropist, the statesman, or the divine, to endeavour to perfect as far as possible the knowledge of their attendants, so that no means may be left untried to diminish so great a mortality in mothers and in children.

To the ministers of religion, especially, sudden and unexpected death must excite the most alarming and awful considerations, to which the important but minor evils of loss of maternal affection, and a mother's care over a poor man's family, must bear but a small relation.

The Registrar General of births, deaths, and marriages, observes—"That if schools for the education of nurses and midwives were established in the metropolis and the large towns under medical supervision, and some distinction were conferred upon those who proved attentive, kind, and skilful, such schools would probably be frequented. In a year or two, intelligent women would acquire at such an institution sufficient education and skill to be useful nurses. An institution for the education of nurses would probably succeed better than many of the medical

schools, but they would be nurses for the middle and higher classes."

Another advantage which this plan would produce if carried into effect, is, that nurses might be found, who, during the period of their education would attend upon many of those miserable cases, in which poverty is associated with illness and loss of all the means and comforts of life.

As the wards of the Hospital are open only to married females, an opportunity is also afforded to the public of obtaining wet nurses from among a class of persons, who, however poor they may be, are far removed from that class to which the rich and affluent are often obliged to apply for nurses of this description. An appeal in favor of a Charitable Institution, the necessity for which is adduced from such important considerations, cannot be made in vain.



Subscriptions and Donations in aid of the Hospital, and in furtherance of its enlargement, will be gladly received by WILLIAM SOUTTER, Esq., New Market Street; at the Bank of Messrs. TAYLOR AND LLOYD's, High Street; or at Messrs. ELKINGTON AND CLARKE's, Accountants, 11, Bennett's Hill.

*The profits of this Pamphlet, if any, will be applied to the increase of the Hospital Funds.*

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