

Notes on the Cancer Hospital (Free), Brompton / by Lady John Manners.

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NOTES ON THE CANCER HOSPITAL (FREE), BROMPTON.

By LADY JOHN MANNERS.

AMONG the many diseases that afflict humanity, perhaps the most awful is cancer. This terrible illness attacks people of all classes, and inhabitants of all countries. Sometimes its inroads are stealthy, sometimes the sufferer succumbs quickly. The throat, the tongue, the organs of digestion, and other delicate parts of the body are often attacked; and it is well known that women are peculiarly liable to be seized with this malady, while the origin of many illnesses may be traced to some recognised cause, such as neglect of proper sanitary arrangements, bad air, bad water, or infection. I have heard that cases of cancer occur which cannot be traced to any assignable reason. The sufferings endured by the rich when afflicted by cancer in the mouth or throat are most distressing, even when delicate food is specially prepared for them; but what must be the agonies of the poor? Perhaps it is better not to allow our sympathies to dwell too long on these subjects till we become morbid, but to set ourselves in earnest to help the sufferers practically by supporting that noble institution, the Cancer Hospital, in the Fulham Road, Brompton.

This hospital was founded by Dr. Marsden—in memory of a beloved wife, who died of cancer after sufferings heroically borne. Thus the sorrow felt by her husband for her loss has been the source of comfort to many thousands. I read in the last report that from the date of its foundation, in the year 1851, up to Dec. 31, 1886, 22,934 patients had been treated at the hospital, of whom 4995 were men, 17,939 women. This disease attacks little children, the young, the middle-aged, and the old. In the year 1885 there were four boys and five girls under ten years old being treated at the hospital. I will not enumerate the different statistics, but middle life appears to be the age at which women are most liable to be attacked; many also were admitted after sixty, while eleven women who had attained the age of eighty, and five men of the same age, were admitted in 1885, and one man of ninety became an inmate of the wards.

Dr. Marsden, who lost his wife in 1840, when but little was known of the treatment of cancer, felt that the study of this disease might be prosecuted further; and, with the view of affording facilities for students, as well as to alleviate the sufferings of those afflicted by this terrible disease, he established the first Cancer Hospital in London in Cannon-row, Westminster. A house was afterwards taken in Hollywood Road, Brompton; but soon the contributions of the benevolent increased, the necessity for a large building was recognised, and the present handsome hospital was built. It is a consoling thought that many cases are cured, and, in a still greater number, sufferings are greatly alleviated; also many operations are painlessly performed.

Still, when we reflect on the agonising pain and

exhaustion that in many instances must be endured by the sufferers, we must feel it a privilege to be permitted to do individually what little we can to mitigate. At the hospital all that is possible is done to cheer the patients. The eight large wards are cheerful and pleasant; there are also three special wards, all kept in the most perfect order, and exquisitely clean.

In the report of miscellaneous contributions I read how many kind people have sent flowers, fruit, and newspapers for the patients, game and clothing. Hon. Lady Beauchamp sent men's underclothing, jellies, and tea for the patients of one ward; Lady Cave sent tickets for the Horticultural Society and the Inventions Exhibition; Lord Crewe fifty rabbits; the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres ten brace of pheasants. Several kind ladies have lent carriages for drives for the patients. Lady Sophia Melville sent five pounds to be applied in that manner. The Misses Lillingston sent six bottles of eau de Cologne, which must indeed have been most refreshing to the sufferers. Sir Robert and Lady Abercromby sent game, ham, chickens, jelly, oranges, new laid eggs, and many ladies have sent presents, which betoken so much thought, that we may be sure the blessings promised in Holy Writ to those who consider the poor will rest on them. Still, in spite of the liberality of many subscribers, the hospital greatly needs funds. Though the progress of science has discovered means of alleviating the sufferings of those attacked, cancer is on the increase, I am told, especially among men. It is alleged that too much smoking tends to irritate the tongue, mouth, and throat, and that if the use of tobacco is continued when the throat is in peculiarly sensitive condition, men are liable to be seized by this terrible illness.

Those who are in health can scarcely realise how awful is the condition of a person suffering from cancer in the mouth or throat, even when wealth can procure the most skilful medical care, and when the most nourishing liquid food can be administered. What, then, must be the condition of the very poor when doomed to suffer in a miserable home, compelled to swallow unsuitable food? I fear that in some counties, from inscrutable causes, many cases of cancer occur among the labouring classes. We can hardly imagine what it must be to lie all through the year in constant suffering that must, if not skilfully treated, end fatally. At the Hospital for Cancer "patients are admitted without a letter from a Governor, disease being a sufficient qualification for admission."

But the hospital only contains a hundred beds, on an average about two hundred, including out-patients, are treated a week, and, as applications are constantly received from all parts of the United Kingdom, from India, and from the Australian colonies for admission, it will easily be believed that the hospital needs all the support that the benevolent can bestow on it.

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