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Some Scientific Courses for Nurses

Who should have charge of this part of the nurse’s training? Very definitely it should not be in the hands of the practising physician. The temptation to fit the course to the exigencies of the actual practice of medicine would be too great. The same applies to registered nurses who have not had special training. These courses should be given by persons who have had a thorough biological and chemical training, and every attempt should be made to retain that point of view. The presence of such a person in the teaching personnel of each hospital would eventually probably mean that the equivalent of nearly a year’s work would be given along the lines outlined above. We feel that this would be a great stride in the solution of the problem of assuring the nursing profession its foremost position among the professions that appeal to those women who seek economic and mental individuality.

Such work as we attempted of course presupposes the hearty coöperation of those in authority. As superintendent of nurses, Miss Brown showed that spirit of coöperation and vision of a brighter future that made our experiment possible and our labor, an easy and pleasant task.

NURSING DURING THE PRE-CHRISTIAN ERA

BY ELLA E. SHARP

The very word “nurse,” i.e., “nourish,” is almost sufficient proof in itself of the original connection of women with the care of the sick. It has always been woman’s part to nourish the weak, beginning with her own babes, in the nourishing of whom no doubt her first sense of responsibility was founded. From that natural beginning has developed her sense of responsibility to the race, both of the present and the future, and more especially her sense of responsibility towards the sick, weak, and disabled. Men, as the gregarious instincts of the race grew and developed, learned gradually the meaning of comradeship, and with this knowledge sought and acquired the skill which would enable an injured comrade to keep up with his fellows,—the beginning of medical science and surgical skill—while to women, in proportion as the race became more and more settled in its abodes, fell the more patient task of watching, guarding, and nursing the injured man through periods of disablement and sickness, as well as

1 Miss Sharp, a student nurse at the City Hospital, New York, who died during the epidemic of influenza, was an unusual woman, of culture and education. She had been a teacher of history and brought to her studies in History of Nursing, a fund of knowledge “greater than her teachers possessed.” She had lived in South Africa at one time. She gave promise of becoming, in years to come, a leader in the nursing profession, so that her death seemed a greater tragedy.
of doing all that could be done for the weak and ailing among themselves and their children. But it is not even to the beginnings of the human race that we must look for the first display of nursing care,—many of the so-called lower animals show a wonderfully correct "instinct" in the care of the sick and injured, and I have, myself, seen a baboon on a rocky hillside in South Africa, sitting in a sunny spot, holding and rocking in its long, hairy arms a shivering, trembling, moaning comrade, apparently sick with pneumonia, pressing its hands on the invalid’s side whenever the creature coughed, just as we ourselves might do in similar circumstances.

We know well that many savage tribes practice a system of medicine, surgery, and therapeutics, far from contemptible, and from our observations of them, we can gain some idea of the actual part of primitive woman in the care of the sick. If the customs of modern savages be taken as a criterion, we may judge that not merely the care of the patient in his bed, but the gathering and preparing of herbs, drugs, and simples fell to her share, and that the empirical knowledge of many generations of women formed no mean foundation of the modern apothecaries' and physicians' art, if "art" they will allow it to be called,—indeed we have conclusive proof of that, in the fact that the craft at last became so attractive that men seized upon it and jealously guarded it as their own special prerogative, just as a Kaffir chieftain of now-a-days will seize upon the tinsel finery presented by the missionary lady to his wife, and deck his own person therewith.

In considering the question of nursing in pre-Christian periods, however, we are more apt to think of the great and now decayed civilizations of the East, about which hang a glamour not only of age, but of the mystery inevitable to the story of a great rise and fall. One of the first things we notice in dealing with them is the fact already mentioned,—that the practice of medicine, though still dependent on purely empirical knowledge, is now in the hands of men, women occupying if not a degraded position, at least one in which their freedom of movement is so restricted that their activities on behalf of the sick are necessarily confined to the house, and though that certainly is the place where the most important and the most successful work is done, yet its seclusion from the eyes of the "world" has resulted in our having practically no record of the work done by women, though we have much information, direct and indirect, of that done by men.

The great skill of the Israelitish women in midwifery is certainly mentioned in the Book of Genesis, but we know that with all the disadvantages incidental to the age, the women of Israel possessed
an unusual amount of freedom and opportunity for intellectual
development,—unusual, that is, among Eastern people. We know
of the existence in Egypt of sacred books, jealously guarded by the
hierarchy, which were concerned entirely with the practice of medicine,
and in Babylon the existence of a code of laws recently discovered
proves that medicine and surgery were of sufficient importance to call
for a forensic code concerned with them. In Assyria, as in Egypt,
the right of treating and healing the sick rested with the priests, with
the result natural in religions symbolical of the mysteries of nature,—
that medicine and magic soon became confounded, to the point of
being actually synonymous. In India and Assyria, on the other hand,
especially during the time when the religion of Buddha held sway,
most intelligent, enlightened, and hygienic methods of dealing with
disease and injuries prevailed, and the rules laid down for physicians
lay great stress upon the holiness of a leech's calling, and the humanity
which it is necessary for him to exercise. Laws for the protection of
the sick, and public works and institutions for disease were almost
as common among the pious Hindus and Singalese as among our-
selves to-day, and their existence gives rise to the belief that probably
a definite system of nursing by women and a definite organization of
women nurses existed, too,—it being difficult to see, even in those
days, just how such institutions could be run without them. I have
been disappointed in my search for information as to medical and
nursing conditions in the far East and in the old civilizations of
South America, but no doubt some kind of records of them are to be
found.

Perhaps the best picture we can find of nursing conditions is to
be found in the pentateuch. There the most secret hygienic details
of the life of the individual are so minutely dealt with, and such strict
rules are given for the maintenance of public and private cleanliness
and sanitation, in the care of women no less than of men, that one
might almost believe women had assisted in making them, and
certainly they would play a most important part in seeing that they
were strictly and carefully carried out. If, as is generally believed,
the Jews drew their knowledge of public hygiene and medicine from
the Egyptians, then we may conclude that in Egypt, also, despite the
absence of hieroglyphic records of the fact, women took an important
share in the practice of leechcraft, and their position may, therefore,
have been more favorable than at first sight appears. That preventive
hygiene was understood by both races is apparent from these books of
Moses. The women of the Greeks, who also boasted themselves the
pupils of the Egyptians, occupied a far lower plane than the Jewish
and, presumably, than the Egyptian women. They were secluded in
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much the same manner as are the Hindoo women of to-day, and were not even required to be beautiful and attractive as the Hindoo women are,—merely useful and fruitful. While medicine among the Greeks occupied a high place and took on an almost scientific aspect, while physicians were held in such honor as even to achieve apotheosis, woman's part was limited to the nursing of her own family and slaves,—no less skilfully, no less intelligently, perhaps, but still in the dark. Since they, however, like the nurses of to-day, were under the direction of the ever-advancing male physician, progress in the art of nursing was probably, with them also, steady. In Rome the laws of the republic gave great freedom to women, and though nominally the chattel of first her father, then her husband, there were so many safeguards provided for her and so many loopholes of escape from the law, that a Roman woman who had chosen as a profession the care of the sick need have found no hindrance in her way. The lack of humanity characteristic of the powerful Romans, however, shows in no instance stronger than in their public neglect of the sick. Among all the great ruins of their architecture no trace of a hospital, asylum, orphanage, or other public institution of humanity has been found, and as their most skilful physicians, often educated slaves, were imported from Greece, it is likely that the Roman women also took no further duty on themselves than the care of their own households and slaves. Such was the state of affairs at the time of the birth of Christ,—the Jewish women leading, the Roman women last, in works of compassion and mercy.

EDITH CAVELL'S BODY TAKEN TO ENGLAND

On March 17, the body of Edith Cavell, buried at Brussels, was exhumed, placed in a double coffin of zinc and oak, and conveyed to the Tir National. On May 13, it was placed on a gun carriage drawn by six black horses and was taken by a long route to the station, preceded and followed by British troops. After a short service in the station hall, it was placed on a British warship.

On May 15, an imposing service was held at Westminster Abbey, after which the body was taken to Norwich, Miss Cavell's native town, where services were held in the cathedral. At all these services great crowds were present representing all classes of people, all sincerely mourning the heroic nurse who gave her life so bravely.