

The Sublimity of Modern Nursing

By

Sister Auxilia, S.M.I., R.N.,
Krishnagar, West Bengal

THE history of modern nursing can be traced back to the time when the first man dipped a leaf into icy water and placed it on the burning forehead of his suffering companion thereby bringing relief and comfort to his suffering. With this chance discovery, man began to realise his age-old longing to combat disease and to soothe the aching humanity. Urged by the desire to care for the sick, to prevent illness and to promote health, man plunged forward to devote much of his time and talents for medical advances. The rapid progress in medical sciences, with the countless new drugs, surgical procedures and methods of preventing diseases have widened the scope further; consequently nursing developed slowly through the ages, from the time when medicine was chiefly magic, to the present, when its roots go deeply into natural and social sciences. With increased responsibility, a nurse has become an indispensable member of the society.

Nursing is both an art and a science. It is a fine art and requires as exclusive a devotion, as hard a preparation, as any painter's or sculptor's work. The art is based on intellectual study and careful training. The purpose is to afford a skilled medical service with ethical cord. Modern treatment lays stress on both the care of the diseases and prevention of sickness. "An ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure", so goes the saying and fortunately, it is gradually taking on meaning and significance in the fields of medicine and nursing.

When a man falls a victim to illness a great deal of energy is spent to bring him back to his former state of being both from the side of the physician and the patient. This is why prevention is highly exalted in the medical field. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that health and main-

tenance is the responsibility of every man, woman and child as individuals, it is also a group and social responsibility of the family, school, business etc. Health is a gift of God and must not be wasted. All men have been created to fulfil some useful purpose in life. But because of ill health many are rendered partially or totally incapable of achieving their life objectives. Handicapped or impoverished, these people become social liabilities and may weigh heavily upon their families, the community and perhaps on the governmental resources. One of the important duties of a nurse is to arouse in the people a yearning to protect their health so as to fulfil their life's mission. The public must be taught this fact by pamphlets, posters, personal contact, group instructions etc.

Science is marching headlong with its unique achievement in every sphere and man is gaining mastery over nature. Yet strange it may seem, man has failed in his effort to overcome disease. Nevertheless, rapid progress is made in the medical field and diseases once thought incurable are being cured under new light.

The modern role of a nurse as co-worker of the doctor can hardly be over-estimated. She is a link between doctor and patient and as such she must develop suitable mental qualities—even temper, sympathy, efficiency, accuracy of observation and report. An efficient nurse, who is a mine of latest information as regards her pro-

fession, who is docile and loyal, aids the doctor tremendously in his diagnosis and treatment. The doctor relies so much on the observation of the nurse that she becomes largely the eyes and ears of a doctor.

Cure and prevention does not merely consist in physical health, but also in mental, emotional and spiritual well-being of the patient. It is estimated that one out of every four individuals who consult a physician is suffering from ailment that has an emotional basis. Every normal life includes conflicts, fears and anxieties of some kind. Many people, because of their constitutional make-ups become ill due to relatively slight conflicts, while others bear all varieties of trouble and trial without developing any symptoms at all. It is not the presence of emotions that cause untold harm but the failure to detect the cause of emotional conflicts which in the long run leads to organic damage. It is in the lessening of fears that give rise to emotional conflict that a nurse has to play her part to prevent diseases. She must reassure patients, help them with their problems and not ignore them.

Nursing is the most maternal of all professions. Nurse-patient relationship can be compared to parent-child relationship. As the child is helpless and depends on the mother, so a patient depends on the nurse, for care and protection. Just as the mother's care

(Contd. on page 143)

STOP PRESS

With profound sorrow and regret we announce the passing away of Miss A. Wilkinson, ex-President of TNAI and a very active Life Member of the Association on May 15, 1967, at St. Stephen's Hospital, Delhi, after a short illness, at the age of 91.

—Editor