

HEALTH VISITORS AND THEIR WORK

By MISS GRIFFIN.

EVERY year nurses complete their training in hospitals and pass out. Where do they all go? Some probably marry, some remain on in their hospitals, and others go on to higher posts in other hospitals; still there must be many who go out from the hospital with no definite purpose in mind.

The new career of health visitors is comparatively little known though there is a great demand for these specially trained workers. This demand will increase as years go on and the science of preventive medicine gets more generally known.

In England the Ministry of Health recognizes that the best foundation for a health visitor's training is three years in a hospital followed by a course in midwifery. This holds good even more in India where girls enter the nursing profession at a younger age than in England. At the end of her training as a nurse the candidate is of a better age to start on her career as a health visitor. The work of a health visitor differs from that of a nurse in that she does no actual nursing but all her energies are devoted to preventing disease; she is a health missionary. Her duty is to be the friend of the family and the councillor of the mother who will then come to the health visitor in all her troubles.

Now for the requirements of a health visitor—First she must be strong and healthy, the life is strenuous and means hard work; but being largely out of doors it helps to keep the worker fit. A health visitor must have a good supply of tact; she has to deal with all sorts and conditions of people and very often they are opposed to any new methods and any sort of reform. Endless tact and patience are needed to make any headway.

Sympathy is the next qualification, the health visitor must feel a *real* interest in her mothers and babies. Mothers very soon find out if the health visitor is just doing her work so as to write up a large number of visits in her reports. When the women see that she loves the babies and wishes to be a real friend, they will soon give her their love and trust and once this has been gained, the rest is easy.

The health visitor needs to have a broad outlook on life and to be able to see things from the view point of others. If she can see only her own side then she should choose some other career. The ideal health visitor must be able to put herself in the mother's place so as to be able to realise her difficulties, in this way only can she help her.

A health visitor must be honest in her work. I do not mean that she must not steal other people's money or goods, but honest in the sense of doing her work accurately. When authorities are wanting large numbers of visits etc., the temptation is to scamp the work so as to get in a large

number of calls in the day and so please the 'Powers that be'. But this kind of work does not produce good results.

Cleanliness and neatness in dress is necessary as the health visitor should be a pattern to be copied.

Cheerfulness is one of the most important assets of the perfect health visitor, she will have endless difficulties to overcome and must keep cheerful both for her own sake and for that of the mothers. Cheerfulness is very catching and the health visitor should radiate happiness, even if she feels impatient with the ignorance and dullness of the women she is trying to teach.

A nurse's training in observation will stand the health visitor in good stead as this quality is one of the most valuable in her work. If she keeps her eyes open she will see much more than any mother will tell her.

Now for the nurse's prospects as a health visitor. The special training is for one year and includes such subjects as sanitation, tropical diseases, maternity and child welfare, psychology, economics, dietetics and some homely training in cookery and sewing. Practical work includes home visiting, attendance at Welfare Centres and supervision and teaching of dais. During the training some scholarships are available and Rs. 40 a month is given to students, quarters are provided and conveyance for work when necessary. At the end of the course posts are found at pay varying from Rs. 75 to Rs. 150 a month with furnished quarters etc. If the health visitor is capable she may rise to posts at Rs. 300 per month, or even more; everything depends on her own personality and capability.

The work is very interesting and should appeal to all who love children and who also love their country. Health visitors take a large share in helping to rear healthy citizens and such citizens are a great asset to the State. Today there is a large demand for workers trained in preventive methods and as I said earlier this demand will be greater. We want numbers of trained nurses to come forward for training as health visitors. I hope this article will help to explain what a health visitor's work is. It is a good thing to cure people when they are ill but it is a far better thing to prevent their getting ill at all.

To Make Vim.—Equal quantities of bath brick and whitening and a little washing powder. Mix well.

A lemon hint.—If you heat a lemon thoroughly before squeezing you will get nearly double the amount of juice

The occasions do not make the frailty of a man, but they show what he is.

To pardon an injury is the best cure for the wound it has made in one's heart.