

PATIENT'S RELATION TO SOCIETY  
AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN NURSING EDUCATION

XIII.

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By

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## FOREWORD

One of the most ~~potent~~ results of education is the knowledge that a man may benefit himself by serving society. This paper is written to show that the education of the student nurse would be enriched by the additional study of the relationship of the patient to society.

## Patient's Relation to Society and its Importance in Nursing Education.

### Introduction.

The principles of nursing education are not fundamentally different from those that govern other phases of education, and as the objective aims of educators have been revised and broadened during the last few years so have the principles of nursing education been expanded.

The educators, in seeking a new path by which this expansion was possible, turned to the leadership of those who have been preaching the gospel of social studies. The addition of social studies to the curriculum gives to the youngsters an understanding of the society in which they live and a desire to improve it; while to the nurse, who has heretofore spent all of her time in the routine tasks of taking care of the sick, it will give the ability to help the sick make the necessary readjustment to life.

The ideal nurse is the woman who possesses not only the dexterity and obedience necessary in carrying out the physicians' orders but also a knowledge and love of humanity. The word "knowledge", referring to the knowledge of the laws of nature, includes everything relating to the physical and

living universe.

In order to serve society and help the individual make the necessary readjustments to life it would first be necessary to consider in what way man, the individual, is related to society. Man being a part of humanity is also a part of society, the carrier of culture and the relation of the individual to the society varies both with the social situation and the character and state of the individuals. Human history records the experience of the race to prove that man is affected by the world in which he lives and work in turn is affected by him.

#### HISTORY OF SOCIAL WORK.

Sympathy and pity cause people to want to help each other and in looking back at history we find that both a static and dynamic attitude has been used in taking care of the sick and the poor.

Before the Christian Era the people harbored a truly static opinion. The religion of the Egyptian and Hebrew people taught kindness, justice and charity toward the poor with the firm belief, "once poor, always poor."

The Greeks and Romans were a little more social conscious and thought it was up to the state to conserve the



individual lest the whole state become weakened. They put a tax on people to provide money for the poor and to open up public hospitals.

With the advent of the Christian Era came a more dynamic attitude. The sympathetic insight into the real need of man brought about a realization of the potential value of the individual.

The first relief at this time was provided by the churches. Monasteries were built which provided a parochial system of relief. This system of relief however did not improve society but kept the people in poverty and it was not until the twelfth century, when St. Francis of Assisi led his lay associates to a life with the poor, that a renewed interest and value was placed on these individuals. This led to a great many church organizations doing a sympathetic and understanding work among the poor.

The christian church, identified as it was for the most part with the state, increased pauperism and misery. England was suffering in the same way and alms giving for able bodied men became a demoralizing factor in the increase of professional beggars. This gave King Henry VIII the opportunity to bring about the dissolution of the monasteries dividing their property among his court favorites who in turn were responsible for the poor.

With the monasteries gone and the poor at the mercy of the nobles, who lived in a profusion of splendor, the life of

the indigents became more wretched than ever and they were forced once more to seek aid from the church.

The church invested as it was with sympathy and understanding, failed in solving the ever increasing problem of taking care of the poor and finally the nation assumed some of the responsibility for the destitute by passing the Poor Law. The Poor Law marked the change from church to secular poor relief.

Up to the time of the Black Death, there was very little the people could do to defend their rights. They were for the most part held in bondage by the nobles whose ever increasing demands served only to hold them in slavery. The Black Death which caused a shortage of labor gave them the long looked for opportunity to fight for their rights and consequently the first organized struggle for human rights took place with the peasants' rebellion. There was introduced at this time a wage and rent system and finally labor was made compulsory by the passing of the Statute of Laborers.

With the social unrest in England at this time, and the struggle for human rights, the people took on an irresponsible mode of life and many of them became vagabonds living on alms which they received at monastery gates.

The next change was brought about by Queen Elizabeth who <sup>think of</sup> ~~thought~~ this social unrest and irresponsible mode of living

was undermining the discipline among her people, ~~she~~ passed the Elizabethan Poor Law which forced every able bodied person to work, and put the feeble in the alms house and bound out the dependent children. To provide money for the alms house she levied a tax on all citizens. The Statute of Apprentices followed the Poor Law forcing people not only to work but also to be employed in the same place until an apprenticeship had been served. Poverty increased; rents were high and types of labor changed leaving the poor people more destitute than ever. To add to their misery the Settlement Act was passed which restricted relief to those who resided in a parish. If a man moved out of a parish and at an old age became poor he was not given aid. This harsh regulation is still in effect today; a patient must reside in a county or state for a given time before he becomes eligible for medical treatment.

With the commencement of the Modern Era we find not only changes in agriculture but an influx of industrialism until the beginning of the nineteenth century England was in a condition of social deterioration. The people had moved into towns to seek employment where wages were low and living conditions became exceedingly trying for them. The challenge to modern society at this time was to meet the new conditions of an industrial civilization and to wrest human values from a machine age.



The church believed in social classes and did not want to change the social status of the poor. Poverty, they believed, was the result of misdemeanor and so taught the people to accept their lowly position and to be obedient servants to the upper classes. It was not until <sup>LATER THAT</sup> John Edward, the forerunner of modern social work, discovered that diagnosis must precede cures. He visited fewer people but treated them in a more kindly manner. By his publications he finally convinced the state of her responsibility to those placed in prisons and emphasized the inadequacy of sympathy alone to effectually help human distress.

In 1800 England took its first census which showed clearly that the state recognized it's duty in knowing the vital cultural and economic conditions of the whole nation. This showed a trend toward the employment of scientific methods and thirty years later the English Statistical Society was founded. The object of this society was to obtain moral and physical conditions of populations in city neighborhoods. The society accomplished much for they were able to inform the nation that poverty, sickness, crime and other social ills were not isolated conditions; they were inter-related.

At about this same time the people began to assert the individual rights of man. There existed free competition

in earnings and living with no responsibility to others. Life to most of these people became a survival of the fittest with no one present to see that those participants who were equally equipped with talents or natural gifts were provided with a judge for fair play. No service was procured to help the disadvantaged to overcome his handicap. This unlimited exploitation of the weak by the strong was found to be destructive to society both in England and in America until enforced minimum standards were set up. This brought about the restriction of work periods, an eight hour day for nine year old children, and factory inspection.

With the need for government control came the demand for sanitary regulation and in 1845 the first Public Health Bill was passed. A spirit of personal service was incorporated into this new regulation of health by Florence Nightingale who raised the nurse from the "Sairy Gamp" type to a scientifically trained human person.

This new policy of government control would not have proven a failure if there had been a scientific determination of what was involved in making the individual fit to help himself. The poor who still constituted a large percentage of population were now given relief by private charity.

The first scientific effort to promote the happiness

or social elevation of mankind was undertaken by Samuel Bartren who lived in a rectory in the slums of London. Realizing the futility of giving bread to the poor he undertook instead the task of improving their living conditions. He went to Oxford where he stressed the need of individuals to study social conditions as they existed, consequently, about one hundred men of liberal thought came to live in his London parish. These men did not acquire the habits of the poor but lived their own lives and helped the indigent of the community to readjust themselves to life. This marked the beginning of organized charity and Toynbee Hall, the home of Samuel Barton, became the first settlement house. This was the inspiration for our own Hull House of Chicago under the direction of Jane Addams.

After the middle of the nineteenth century, public relief began to apply science to the problem of poverty. In the United States the Metropolitan Board of Health was established, general hospitals increased, ambulances were used, and training schools for nurses were instituted,

The more liberal groups in England, at the beginning of the twentieth century, began to agitate for a revision of the poor law and as a result old age pensions, insurance against sick and minimum wage boards were established. In the United States social concern for the most part took the



form of social work under private auspices. There was extensive development of social work but delayed growth of public service until gradually there has emerged the larger purpose of social case work. The application of a large amount of scientific knowledge to human welfare has made possible the helping of human personality to develop and the improvement of social conditions. The objective of the social worker today is to help make society fit for every individual.

#### NURSING AND ITS RELATION TO SOCIAL WORK.

Poverty, as shown by the history of the race, has been a very important factor in the existence of society or its organizations and as a social disease it has been the outcome of physical discomfort. Communities from the earliest times have made a futile effort to meet the physical disorder.

Many hospitals were put into disuse with the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII. Nursing service was greatly impaired and the women needed for nursing were taken from an illiterate class. The nurse was very much overworked and divided her time between housework, laundry, scrubbing and a pretense of nursing. She was usually a middle aged woman and took refuge from the drudgery of her



life by indulging in strong drink. The average family in England at this time, dreading this type of nurse, doctored themselves with home-made medicines.

The political situation from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century lead to a general indifference to suffering. The few hospitals under city management were cheerless, airless and unsanitary. Conditions on the continent, which were very much the same as those in England, were finally relieved in the nineteenth century by the advent of the Sisters of Charity and the organization of Kaiserswerth.

Following this the Anglican church in England organized groups of women to take care of the sick. They had very little training but were praiseworthy women of admirable culture and capacity. They set a high standard wherever they went, thus inaugurating the work of rescuing nursing from the depths into which it had fallen.

Industrialism and science were making rapid strides throughout the country with philanthropic societies taking a renewed interest in the welfare of the people. Women, who heretofore were kept in the back ground in any social movement, began to take an active part in the cultivation of the fine and liberal arts. Among these women was Florence Nightingale who saw the great need for getting trained people to take care of the sick. She revolutionized the whole ex-

isting system of nursing by the introduction of educated, trained and refined women. Private duty was instituted and the nurses received instruction in the care of the sick in the home as well as in the hospital. Service to humanity was the keynote in nursing as taught by Florence Nightingale, and following the plan of Florence Nightingale nursing schools were introduced in the United States.

In the history of the race we have seen the futile attempts made by the church and the state to alleviate the existing conditions of the poor. The first scientific effort to promote their happiness was undertaken by Samuel Barton. He, as we have already seen, made an effort to lessen their social distress by helping them make the necessary readjustment to life.

How then is the nurse to be of service to humanity? To be in a position to benefit humanity the nurse must learn the intimate relationship between the ill of the physical body and home environment. She must remember that individuals do not develop in a remote kinship of existence called society but in connection with one another. The conditions of their participation and communication, of their co-operation and competition are set by legal, political and economic arrangements.

The family as the core of society is the strategic point of attack. Charles A. Elwood in speaking of the family

says, "The most significant and omnipotent function of the family is in that it serves as the principle point of transfer of civilization from one generation to another; (therefore) there are other agencies through which he (the individual) learns, but in the earliest years the influence of the family is overwhelmingly preponderant."

Heredity, so say the scientists of today, plays a minor role in the life of man while environment counts for much. The kind of a world the individual lives in and how clever he is in adjusting himself to his surroundings constitute the human being.

The prolonged infancy and helplessness of the human child keeps him under the protection of the family for a number of years therefore we must look to the family as a training center of our youth.

The nurse in doing her part toward the betterment of society must first learn how these people live. Failures in life have come through inability of the individual to take his place as a member of a group. The rapid increase of manufacturing plants and other scientific inventions have caused people to be thrown out of their natural environments into foreign fields, thus forcing upon them the necessity of readjusting themselves to society.

The cities have consequently become very congested



and the family, which had once enjoyed a happy rural life, is now living in a crowded district, poor neighborhood and is struggling for an existence.

These people, who, because of the ever changing social conditions, have become both mentally and physically unfit to carry on the responsibility of life and are in the hands of the physician and nurse.

#### EDUCATION OF THE NURSE.

The hospitals, while developing students as nurses, should not lose sight of their responsibility in developing women with appreciation of the finer things in life as well as training them to become good citizens. The nurses' training itself should be made a genuine form for active community life instead of a place set apart in which to learn nursing skills.

Too often, after a period of training in the hospitals, the nurse has become efficient in doing the routine tasks of taking care of the physical ills of the body while the mental condition of the patient and his reaction to the hospital environment have been completely forgotten.

The detailed method of procedure regularly followed by the nurse in the performance of her various duties, when re-



peated often enough, is apt to become an unconscious habit. The nurse although gaining in technical skill will take much of her work as a matter of course and will thereby loose some of the human alertness and responsiveness which she had when she entered the hospital. If she could be sent out with a worker to visit the homes of these patients she would have a vivid impression of the back ground of her future patients which would enable her to nurse them with more of a sympathetic attitude.

In taking care of the patient the nurse should think of him not as an individual to be treated for a specific illness but as a member of a family or community group which has been altered because of his illness. Ida Cannon says, "A man's me is the sum total of all that he can call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors, his friends, his reputation and work, his land and houses, yatch and bank account - many of these aspects of 'me' play an important role in disease and yet may be overlooked in the swift routine of an outpatient clinic."

The student, in thinking of the patient as the sum total of all his worldly possessions, will not only learn how he lives, works and thinks but also the intimate relationship between the ill of the physical body and home environment.

Each profession is divided into social groups and one of the aims of education is adjustment; adjustment of the individual to other individuals and adjustment of individuals to groups. The nurse who has developed understanding, co-operation and tolerance with other workers is in a position to help the social worker in the adjustment of individuals to groups.

The nurse of today must be socially experienced, scientifically informed and have technical efficiency if she is to be of service to humanity. Part of her time should be devoted to the study of social distress, which, no less than physical disease, disturbs and cripples human lives.

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