

The Nursing Care of Tuberculosis Patients*

The Beginning of the Work

CHRISTINA A. MITCHELL, Visiting Nurse, Toronto.

IN the early autumn of 1905, the authorities of the Toronto General Hospital decided that some additional measures should be taken in connection with the treatment of patients, suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis, who came to the out department for treatment. After consideration, three gentlemen personally interested in alleviating the suffering of the tuberculous poor in our city, gave a sum of money to start the work, which was begun in November, 1905. A special clinic was established where those desiring examination and treatment could obtain it free, every Tuesday at 10.30 a.m., at the out-door department of the Toronto General Hospital.

A nurse was appointed at that time to assist the doctor in charge, her duties being to report the weight, temperature, pulse, and respirations, as each patient is examined, giving each a set of printed rules regarding the "fresh air treatment," food, rest, exercise, medicines, and disinfectants, to be used in their homes.

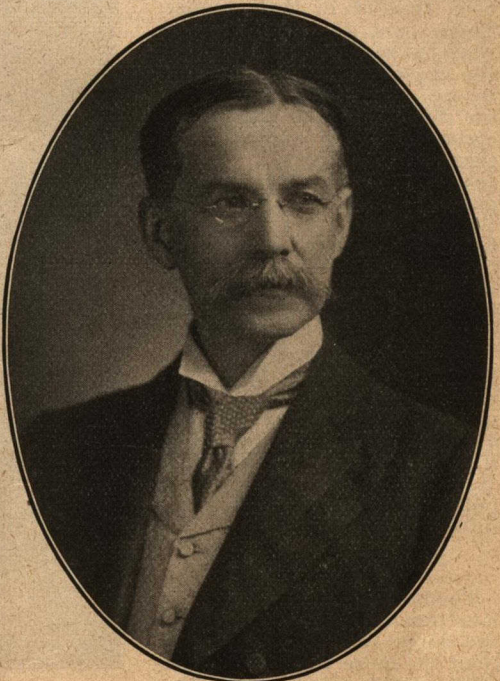
The nurse follows them to their homes during the week, reporting all particulars, such as rise in temperature; effect of medicines; the condition of appetite; habits; the kind of food taken; the condition of the home and its surroundings; the fresh air received and its great importance; the financial condition; if patient sleeps in a separate room from others in the family; how long in present dwelling, and the health of former tenants.

The nurse fills a printed form which is filed with the history of each patient. The nourishment, such as cream, milk, eggs, jelly, etc., is supplied.

THE WORK IN THE HOMES

The nurse is provided with a wicker basket, with a washable linen lining to carry the nursing appliances used in the sick room; it is light and easily kept clean; and she wears cotton uniforms. She is entirely under the direction of the doctor in charge of this work, reporting to him immediately if medical aid is required in the homes visited by her during the daily rounds. All other work is suspended in order to attend to the care of cases of severe hæmorrhage, or of dying patients.

Every attention is paid to the comfort of the patient, rubber air cushions and rings, wheeled invalid chairs, and hammocks loaned. The nurse's desire is to gain the entire confidence of these poor afflicted patients so that the rules and instructions,



DR. A. MCPHEDRAN, TORONTO.
President Canadian Medical Association.

which are sometimes strongly objected to, may be given persuasively, without causing fear or raising opposition. The fact that she can supply the much needed nourishment, or withdraw it should the patient utterly disregard the rules, gives her some authority in enforcing them.

The patients are sceptical and inclined to disregard the important truth, that the earliest beginning of tuberculosis is the time when a cure can be obtained. It is a sad feature that few present themselves for treatment at this stage. After repeated examinations at the clinic, if it is found impossible to have the thorough treatment in their homes, they are advised to go either to the Muskoka Free Hospital for Consumptives at Gravenhurst, or the Toronto Free Hospital for Consumptives, near Weston. No one can tell the great good done by these institutions as well as the nurse, who visits the homes, where the unsanitary conditions favor the disease, and the only chance for the patient is to get them away from these. We are favored above other cities by having them to send our tuberculous poor to.

* Paper read at the Tuberculosis Exhibition, Toronto, August, 1906.