

Nurses, Students. At any rate, that manner of teaching which assumes knowledge and appreciation on the part of the Student, ignorance and unconcern on the part of the Nurse, stands self-condemned, for it is false.

Does anyone complain that the co-partnership between Nurse and Doctor, as here foreshadowed, is intolerably unequal? On your side an unvarying routine, where obedience is the first duty, subordination the fit attitude, and a good conscience the sole reward. On the other side freedom, authority, and a wide prospect of promotion. I am addressing Nurses and not Doctors. For the present, therefore, it is needless to inquire whether the Medical calling is aptly described as one of freedom, variety, and worldly distinction. But, speaking of Nursing, it may be at once admitted that in some sense the Nurse's duties are monotonous, her best service often ill requited, and her hopes in the future strictly limited. But here, as I maintain, is *the touchstone* of the whole matter—the final answer to the question as to the suitability of this woman or that for the Nurse's profession.

We speak vaguely of reward and success in life. But the bare words standing alone may be as variously interpreted as is the face of Nature, that wears a separate aspect for each beholder. The real question is what is it that *you* individually seek in the way of credit and the world's approval? What is it, so far as you know, that will best satisfy your own craving for happiness and content in the business of life? Bring that question to the test in the present case. Granted that the Nurse's profession is, from one point of view, monotonous, thankless, ill-paid; still, whoever finds in that description of it a full and exhaustive account of Nursing work, may be well assured that for her the occupation is altogether unsuited. It will bring some reward or other, no doubt, for there is no way of living in the world wholly unblessed, except doing nothing. At the same time, half the disappointed and spoilt lives we encounter come of mistaken choice and self-delusion at the outset.

Let me take a familiar illustration. It is admitted in the present day that the course of disease is not largely influenced by drugs, but rather by suitable habits, suitable food, suitable dwellings. For many acute illnesses the chief requirement is rest—in the full sense of that word—and the best treatment (and often the most difficult) that which best invites rest. Cure is synonymous with care. Now if this be so, it follows that in most diseases, and conspicuously in some such as typhoid fever, it is to the Nurse that a large share of credit belongs whenever the patient recovers. And supposing a Nurse desirous of securing that credit, and having recorded in her

favour sleepless nights and weary watching, such as help to turn the scale between life and death, it would seem but reasonable that this much should be formally put down to her account. Yet I venture to think—nay, I well know—that any such record, even the voice of applause, would be utterly distasteful to one who has the true genius for Nursing and the key to its secret.

It is a trite saying that this or that good service is its own reward. I do not know that the expression conveys all the truth in this matter; but I am certain that there is an enthusiasm and satisfaction which Nurses find in good work, that would be half spoilt by outside praise; and whoever looks to this, or counts upon it, lacks the Nurse's qualification, and will never taste of her true reward.

Now, if it be true that the Nurse's recompense comes from within rather than from without; and if, added to this, the actual nature of the work be considered, and the demands it makes on the temper, the patience, the physical powers of endurance, some might be led to conclude that no motives but the very highest could ever induce women voluntarily to enter upon such a career. But the fact is not so. There is indeed, as I would maintain, a certain nobility of motive essential for success in the Nursing profession; yet no one with practical knowledge would be led to conclude that Nurses shut themselves out from all the common enjoyments of life, or even that their motives in choosing their vocation—although good and laudable enough—are of that purely spiritual sort that novelists would have us believe.

Nursing just now is a popular profession. It is regarded as a science, and almost as a mystery, as though the tending of the sick were an achievement of modern scholarship, and that there were no good Nurses in the past and no bad ones now. With so much of notice and adulation, and a sex and an age not absolutely proof against either, it is quite possible that the Nurse's diploma may be thought of sometimes rather for its ornament than its use. But there is a yet greater danger, I think, lest good and capable women should draw back from the work out of mere timidity and sense of unworthiness; or still worse, that they should enter upon it from motives of sickly sentiment, overwhelmed and oppressed by the dignity and sacredness of the office. "No man or woman," said Carlyle, "conscious of doing a great thing, was ever in that thing doing other than a small one." The trivial round, the common task, forms the staple of the Nurse's life as of all earthly pursuits. There is no praise, as there is no disparagement, so unjust as that which is based on the mere name of a trade or profession.

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