

and why is it that even the officers are very little better than the rank and file in these respects?" And the answer is that we have just reviewed a body of women, enlisted in the same profession and under the same obligations, but in whose development no generally recognised ethical laws have had a part. By this it is not meant that trained nurses have lived thus far beyond the pale of ethics, but that generally speaking as members of one profession they have been without an adopted code, the exceptions being in the case of isolated schools or *alumnæ* associations. Anything like special moral responsibilities have been vague and indefinite to the many, while the few have evolved them for themselves as a result of observation and experience. Now, however, not as individuals, but as a profession we are beginning to feel an increasing necessity for some such definite moral force or laws that shall bind us more closely together in this work of nurses, and that will bring us into more uniform and harmonious relations. I know of no other body of workers outside of physicians who need just such strength and stimulus as comes from unity of purpose than does that of trained nurses, accustomed as they must become to all sorts and conditions of men and circumstances. My purpose in this paper is not to attempt to formulate or even to suggest anything in the way of a formal code of ethics, but to consider somewhat in detail the nature of ethical laws and try to determine in what ways they may be made to have a practical bearing upon a nurse's duties and actions. What I have to say is said with the hope that here and there a word may commend itself to the thoughtful consideration of those nurses, who, possibly by reason of inexperience, have not taken thought or time to reason out for themselves the underlying principles that ought to govern them in their professional life. To us who have already reached the noon-day of experience and have walked with senses alert and receptive, this dwelling upon details is perhaps not so necessary; indeed, from the richness of our several experiences should come the formulated code of ethics which should be to the younger travellers in the guild as finger-posts along their nursing career, to guide and encourage them at the crossways of purposes, until in the fulness of time they reach this knowledge for themselves. For though it be agreed that experience must ever remain our best teacher and guide, it would seem that she sometimes comes too late, and that for the beginner her teachings can be to a certain extent supplied meanwhile by those she has already taught.

The term ethics means the science that treats of human actions from a standpoint of right and wrong. It teaches men the practice of the duties of human life, and the reasons for what they

should do or should leave undone. These duties are moral, and relate more especially to the private and social relations of men; in the course of time they come to be regarded and received as customary rules of right and duty between man and man, and their acceptance therefore implies free agency. Such moral duties differ from positive duties in that they arise out of the nature of the case, while positive duties do not come from the nature of the case, but are laid down by external command.

In accepting such rules or laws one becomes subject to a principle or duty and is in honour bound to try to do what is right. This capability of discriminating between right and wrong is based on a knowledge of human nature and of the various relations in which man as a moral or social being is or may be placed. Our actions thus become directed by the mind.

The necessity for such moral rules of life being obvious, we find certain unwritten laws or rules of life which have been adopted by man in his relations to himself and to mankind in general, and which are as strong as life itself. As human beings become formed into societies or guilds or crafts, these, besides following the great general moral laws, adopt certain rules or laws which morally are binding upon each member, although they have no legal significance. These moral laws are necessary for the honour, integrity, and the holding together of such societies and for their higher development.

We are all familiar with the saying, "There is honour among thieves." I only quote it because it goes to show that no matter how low in the social scale human beings may fall, they still have some remnant of feeling remaining of the force of these moral laws. Since then codes of ethics must exist for all men and for all ages, in considering them in connection with our own profession of nursing we do but follow in the footsteps of mankind in general, of every age and country.

In addition to ethics we employ another term to designate something which has a wide significance in connection with society and societies. Etiquette, generally speaking, means a form of behaviour or manners expressly or tacitly required on particular occasions. It makes up the code of polite life and includes forms of ceremony to be observed, so that we invariably find in societies that certain forms of etiquette are required and observed either tacitly or by express agreement. Dr. Austin Flint makes the distinction between medical ethics and medical etiquette as follows:—"The former rules have a moral weight, while etiquette on the other hand consists of forms to be observed in professional intercourse and are conventional."

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