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Editorial.

PUBLIC SPIRIT.

The quality of public spirit, defined as the "disposition to advance the interests of the community," is one upon which the British nation has always placed a high value. It has known how to honour men who have given exceptional evidence of its possession, and it looks for its exhibition in some degree in all citizens who desire the esteem and respect of their fellows. A man, indeed, is held of little account who is engrossed solely in his own affairs, whether these be business or pleasure. His neighbours expect of him that he should give a portion of his time to the advancement of the common good, and no amount of devotion to personal affairs will atone for his lack of interest in this direction. The force of public opinion on this point is indeed an inspiring heritage and has largely helped to develop qualities for which British men are held in respect all the world over.

We have also in our midst many public-spirited women, and their names and the good work they have done are amongst our treasured possessions. But, so far, women have not universally accepted, as a duty incumbent upon all, the advancement of the interests of the community.

And what is true of women generally is true also of those who have devoted themselves to nursing work. It would seem, indeed, as if some regarded this lack of public spirit as almost meritorious on their part. How frequently it is said "I have my own work, and it takes me all my time to get through that properly," and the speaker wraps herself round in the cloak of her own virtue as if she were a very superior person to the one whose outlook is wider, who takes pains to find out what is going on in her profession outside her own immediate horizon, and who gives time and personal service to advance the common good.

If there were any proof that the professional work of those who take no interest in public movements were of exceptional excellence, there might be something to be said in support of their position; but the weight of evidence is on the other side, and, practically, it is usually found that the nurse who is interested in public matters is the one who brings the keenest intelligence and best practical knowledge to bear on her own special work. Nor is this surprising. If she studies nursing journals when others are reading novels; if she attends meetings on matters of nursing interest when others are seeking their own pleasure; if, again, she devotes part of her scanty leisure to honorary work for nursing societies of which she is a member, surely this earnest, strenuous, unselfish worker is more likely to bring a wise, liberal, well-considered judgment to bear on the problems which daily confront her than the one who has "no time" to give to work for the good of the community and to the advancement of her own profession.

Let us then at least be honest and confess that if we take no part in public movements for the general good it is not usually from lack of time, but from lack of inclination, of energy, of interest. We shall then have no reason to plume ourselves upon our superiority on this count—quite the contrary. And, this being so, we may perhaps come to appreciate the efforts of those who do show a "disposition to advance the interests of the community," and to honour their work if we take no personal share in it.

Not the least merit of the Leagues of Nurses which are now being organised amongst us is that they are developing a higher conception of duty, wider aims, greater public spirit. The more we widen our horizons, the better will be the service which we give to the world at large, and further the greater will be our desire and our capacity to render it.

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