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Editorial.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF NURSES.

How often does a would-be probationer, keen to enter a hospital, consider the weight of responsibility which falls to her lot as a nurse? Well for her perhaps that she does not do so, for, young and inexperienced as she is, she might well say "who is sufficient for these things"? Yet a nursing career is not one which should be entered on in a light-hearted fashion, for our work lies amongst the tremendous issues of life and death, disease, suffering and sorrow, and should be undertaken in a serious spirit.

In the first place the responsibilities of the duties devolving upon the nurse during her training are very great. Who that has watched through the night hours in a ward full of patients all critically ill, some of whom will never see another day dawn, does not realise it? Who that is charged with the administration of sleeping draughts does not feel the gravity of measuring and administering poisons? Who, preparing patients for operations, and assisting thereat, is not sobered by the thought that any carelessness on her part may result in needless suffering to, or even the death of the patient. On any one who has a sensitive conscience such knowledge weighs heavily.

When she leaves her training school, a certificated nurse, the obligations entailed by her professional position are still numerous. Who, as a welcome visitor in the homes of the poor, can speak more

authoritatively as to the virtues of fresh air, the healthfulness of cleanliness, the evils of overcrowding? The work of a nurse is but half done if she confines herself to purely nursing duties, if, for instance, with all the skill at her command she makes the phthisical patient comfortable, she yet fails in her duty if she does not impress on the relations the infectious nature of the disease from which he is suffering and the precautions which should be taken to prevent its spread. She must be ever on the alert, ever faithful in her discharge of her broader duty to the community.

At the present time the Women's Union of the Church of England Temperance Society have issued an invitation to a Temperance Meeting to trained nurses because they have both greater opportunity for observing the harm done by intemperance, and of dealing with it than any other branch of women workers.

Again, the work of nurses lies to a great extent in houses where trouble, sorrow, or death are found. They need not professional skill alone, but the wider knowledge and sympathy which shall enable them to carry comfort and strength to those who are sore at heart. Think of the recent tragedy at San Francisco, and of the mission of the trained nurse there. It is to the doctor and the nurse that the public turns instinctively at such times, and not in vain, for she ever shows herself responsive to the claim made upon her, but none the less, in spite of outward gaiety, should there be an underlying soberness of heart in all those who adopt nursing as the profession of their choice.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)