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Editorial.

THE OBLIGATIONS OF EMPIRE.

One of the most useful nursing societies is that which will hold its Annual Meeting in the Library of the Colonial Office on Wednesday next, the Colonial Nursing Association. Originally founded by Mrs. Francis Piggott, who, when resident in Mauritius, was impressed by the needless waste of valuable life, consequent upon a lack of nursing, the work of the Association has spread until in most of our Crown Colonies its members are to be found, and it is the recognised agency through which the Colonial Office engages nurses for these Colonies.

The value of good nursing in these outposts of the Empire cannot be over estimated, and it is the duty of the mother country to see to it that those of its sons and daughters who have ventured far afield in its interests do not fall victims to preventable disease, or die for want of adequate care, when skilled nursing might have saved them to be of service to their country for years to come. Nothing has been more characteristic of the past fifty years than the way in which our horizon has been enlarged, and with the enlargement of our horizon has come also the enlargement of our conception of our obligations. Formerly the interests of English girls who lived in the provinces were bound up in the small towns and villages in which they lived, and if they had high ideals they did their best to minister to the poorer neighbours whom they found at their gates. Next they realised that their duty to their neighbour was not merely parochial but national, and

in spite of considerable opposition from anxious relatives they claimed their right to a share in the national life. No service appealed to them more than that of the sick and suffering in our great towns, and thither they came to work in the hospitals—too often to be broken down by reason of the long hours, hard work, and poor food which were then usually their portion. Still the gaps in the ranks were always filled, and as nursing conditions gradually improved, and we had time to look further afield our horizon was still enlarged and we became aware that our obligations were not only national but imperial and international. Now there is no corner of the world too remote, no climate too unhealthy, no duty too arduous to daunt the trained nurse if her services are needed, and there is no greater evidence of the high ideals of the nursing profession than that its members are ever ready to leave home and kindred and civilisation for a life always attended with risk, often monotonous and uneventful, in the service of the sick stranger outside their gates.

One word of criticism reaches us from afar, namely that the nurse who was trained ten or twenty years ago makes a better colonist than the one trained at the present day. She is more devoted to work, and she is not so helpless as the modern nurse, who seems to expect everything ready to her hand, wherever she may be set down, and who lacks initiative.

This, may be attributed to the thorough equipment and complete supervision of our training schools at the present day. Some experience of district nursing in which calls are made on ingenuity and resourcefulness is a good preparation for work abroad.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)