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The Missionary Nurse.

The Valedictory Meetings, which are to take place on Tuesday next in connection with the Nurses' Missionary League, in order to speed on their way eight members who are about to take up missionary work abroad, afford a welcome proof of the desire for service in this direction in the nursing world.

The missionary nurse goes out to her work with high ideals, high hopes; let her never lose those ideals, and always remember that the one object of her life, the object for which she is maintained in the foreign mission field by the self denial of its supporters at home, is that she may further the cause of Christ amongst the heathen. How she may best accomplish this is a matter which she must continually keep before her, and concerning which she will one day have to give an account. But we believe that many nurses make an initial mistake in their conception of what constitutes their share in missionary work. There are some who hold that their skill as nurses is the best gift they can bring to the mission field; there are others who, in all sincerity, believe that their "real" work as missionaries begins only when their nursing ends, with the result that they are apt to slur over the latter in order to be free for the missionary work, which, in their minds, is synonymous with teaching. When we remember that the three years of our Lord's active ministry were devoted quite as much to the healing of the sick as to the work of teaching, we must believe this conception of missionary work to be a mistaken one.

It is probable that often at the root of the desire to engage in teaching is a dissatisfaction with self. The exaltation with which the work was taken up has died down. It is no "great thing" which the nurse is called upon to do, but just to discharge the exacting duties of an ordinary

hospital in a trying climate; work which she could have done just as well at home, where, must it be owned, she perhaps thinks her talents would be more appreciated? The missionary teacher, on the other hand, may be longing for just the opportunities which the nurse fails to recognise, and thinks what a lever she would have if only she were placed in the circumstances of the nurse.

A moment's thought should convince a nurse—that is, if her work lies in a hospital—that it is impossible for her to combine regular outside teaching with nursing. It is impossible for her to do so at home. Why should it be more practicable under more strenuous conditions abroad? If she undertakes it this is certain, that the time will come when, to maintain the regularity of the outside work, she must neglect her own, the burden of which will fall on another nurse, who is already doing her full share, conscientiously and thoroughly.

Another point which is often overlooked is that, as a rule, a nurse has few qualifications as a teacher. It requires special gifts and training to teach theology accurately in one's own language. It is harder still in a language with which one is imperfectly acquainted. For the spread of the broad principles of Christianity a missionary nurse has ample opportunities, in the wards in her charge, in the course of visits to out-patients, in bringing those who express any desire for it under instruction. Let her also bear in mind how closely her life and work are observed by her patients. In a heathen country, they will be "known and read of all men." The Christian life will be estimated by hers. She can place before herself no higher ideal than to be able to say at the end of that life "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." What excuse can she offer for the most active outside work if she has to confess "Mine own vineyard have I not kept?"

M. B.

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