

that rare and beautiful gift—of perfect sympathy with all God's creatures) will there be exercised and developed, strengthening in her, day by day, beautifying, purifying, and heightening her life, and the lives of all those who are about her. In this sphere her powers for good or evil are illimitable, and where the children are—and what heart is unmoved by the suffering of little children—those maternal instincts, without which a true woman never lived, are hourly satisfied by a sense of love bestowed. Her care and gentleness may be the only span of motherhood known in many a forsaken child's life. She has those always with her, whose only inheritance on the face of the earth is loathsome disease, and how sacred these sad little lives become to her! Childhood, as we understand it, is a term of guileless joys, the memories of which sweeten all the after time; but with these others, is it not rather a season of acutest suffering? When little dimpled arins are outstretched to grasp a shadow; when a little passionate heart will throb and beat for a responsive tone that answers not; when a little curly head droops wearily and low on some strange resting-place, when it would be pillowed on its mother's breast and have its eyes kissed to sleep—these lonesome ones are all the Nurses' children, in her heart is room for them and plenteous warmth and sympathy. It has been written—"The first condition of human goodness is something to love; the second, something to reverence."

We all have our ideal of what a Nurse should be, and somewhere in a chink in my brain is lodged an old allegory, which amply describes what manner of woman is worthy of so high a calling. It runs thus: Long, long ago, a deadly plague swept over an eastern land, with ruthless stroke, causing great desolation. A mighty sorrow hushed the people, there seemed no help save only—death. In the heart of the royal city, so the legend runs, the marble palace of a great king stood, with its hanging gardens of lily and rose, where the air was sweet, and the nightingales sang when the sun had fled. The gates of these gardens were closed to the poor, for fear of taint and pain and death, yet the sound of their weeping came, sorrowfully borne on the tender breeze of eventide. In the inner square of the palace court a fountain of enchanted water played, water that sparkled in the sunshine like any jewel to be found in any land, for therein had been cast the germs of love and knowledge. The king had one daughter, who was exceeding fair, for her purity of spirit had sweetened her face, and her heart was sad for the people's woe. She yearned towards them to give them help. She would stand on the terrace at twilight and watch the spray of the waters play, pitying with a great com-

passion those without in their bitter pain. One day she went to her father, the king, and said, "Let me take of the enchanted waters of my fountain to the people, so that I may ease their pain, for they are athirst." And the king repented and let her go. So when the day was done, she passed out softly through the gates of bronze into the midst of the desolate city on which a dim despair had fallen. She had no fear, though her way was weary; in her heart dwelt faith and hope and charity, in her eyes was the light of fellowship, on her lips the serene smile of consolation. Her hand was a cool support, her voice music of tender tone, as she bade them drink and be at rest. Their parch was assuaged, their fever lessened, so that through all the city there was found no more pain, neither any more tears. And the people uprose and blessed her, and called her "Nurse," or "the one who cherished us."

It seems to me that in this little legend is comprised all that can be said as to the qualities necessary in the woman, who is worthy and fit to nurse and cherish her fellow-creatures. We have here the woman whose heart goes out to them in quick compassion, who goes forth to her work humbly and courageously, laden with the illimitable gifts of love and sympathy. Her face is sweet, not with mere external beauty, but with the impress of a pure and lofty nature. Her hand is a support, her voice is melody. She stands before us, the full and perfect realisation of all that can be desired in womanhood, and therefore worthy—nothing more—of fulfilling those duties which merit and call forth the highest attributes of which woman is possessed. Such a woman is more easily described than found, and yet if the personification of so complete a combination of grace is rare, she is no ideal, for we have met and spoken with her. Yet we must not delude ourselves into the belief that this perfect Nurse is, any more than the ideal woman, a common type. She is rare, and though we meet with glimpses of her character here and again, her standard is too high for any but a very chosen few to come even near. That the *best* women are hardly good enough for Nurses, is a fact that the public have not yet fully grasped.

But the last twenty years have, notwithstanding, shown an improvement in Nursing, far greater than it seemed possible to hope for, an improvement more than sufficient to spur us on towards a goal of excellence that may be unattainable, but that is so high, so pure, so noble, that the path towards it will lead us far above all ignoble aims and lower objects. It will raise our daily work so high above the level of selfishness, that the true Nurse will look for no reward, no applause from without, no gratitude even from her patient. She will bring to it all her best and highest qualities,

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