

# THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED  
THE NURSING RECORD

EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 758.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1902.

Vol. XXIX.

## Editorial.

### THE GOSPEL OF WORK.

The present age is an age of self-indulgence and pursuit of pleasure, and the exponents of the gospel of work receive scant attention. The influence of the age has permeated even to our hospitals, and there is need for care lest the manifold interests which enter into a nurse's life detract from the value of her work for the sick, which is in some danger of being put in the second place and regarded mainly as a means of self-support, through which she obtains liberty to engage in other pursuits, rather than as the main object of life.

We should be the last to underrate the value of pleasure. Indeed, the old adage is profoundly true, and the person who works without taking a certain amount of recreation, not only becomes dull himself, but the quality of his work deteriorates. But surely the members of a serious profession such as nursing should regard any pleasures in which they may indulge, not as an end in themselves, but as a means whereby they may acquire fresh energy to bring to their daily work.

The paramount importance of work was well understood by Zola, who, himself a strenuous worker, once spoke as follows in his capacity of President of the General Association of Parisian Students:—

"I presume to offer you a faith; yes, I beseech you to put your trust and your faith in work. Toil, young men, toil! I am keenly conscious of the triteness of the advice. It is the seed which is sown at every distribution of prizes in every school, and sown in rocky soil; but I ask you to reflect upon it, because I, who have been nothing but a worker, am a witness to its marvellously soothing effects upon the soul. The work I allude to is daily work; the duty of moving one step forward in one's allotted task every day. . . . Yes! work is the one great law of the world which leads organised matter slowly but steadily to its un-

known goal. Life has no other meaning, and our one mission here is to contribute our share to the total sum of labour, after which we vanish from the earth."

If we believe that the meaning of life is inseparably bound up with its work, then it becomes of importance to study the best lines upon which this should be advanced, lest we miss much of its usefulness and pleasure.

It is a cardinal rule that the worker, "not to work in vain, must comprehend humanity, and so work humanly." It is little use to sit apart from the multitude and theorise. The essence of effective work is to go amongst others, to learn their needs, and, it may be, to put into words for them longings which they feel but cannot formulate. It is undoubted that one of the reasons why the work of a nurse is so useful, and so satisfying to her, quite apart from its professional interest, is because it brings her directly into touch with her kind, and she has opportunities for studying humanity which are accorded to few.

We have spoken of work as the paramount duty of life; we have touched on the pleasure it affords the worker. Another aspect is the benefit it confers upon the sorrowful. To such it is "the healing of divinest balm, to whomso hath the courage to begin, not yielding to the bitterness of grief."

But not alone for the duty of work, for the pleasure it confers, or the consolation it brings, do we subscribe ourselves as adherents of the gospel of work. It has also a beauty especially its own, and the disciples of the cult of beauty are wise to worship at its shrine. Work for its own sake ever brings its own reward. Do we ask also for success?

"In earthly races  
To winners only do the heralds call.  
But oh! in yonder high and holy places  
Success is *nothing* and the work is *all*."

It is doubtful whether the best work is ever appreciated at its full value by the generation for which it is performed.

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