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Editorial.

THE NATIONAL CHARACTER.

Much has been said and written about the deterioration of nurses at the present time; in relation alike to physique, powers of endurance, and other qualities which go to the making of an ideal nurse, they are said to be inferior to the product of a quarter of a century ago.

But what is at the root of this deterioration? Nurses are but members of the general public who have passed through a course of training in a special branch of work; it may be assumed, therefore, that their shortcomings are the shortcomings of their age, and undoubtedly the canker at the root of the defects of the national character is to be found in the love of pleasure and self-indulgence, and the irresponsibility shown by all sections of the community in relation to manifest obligations. The appallingly luxurious and self-indulgent methods of life of a wealthy and vulgar plutocracy have had their effect on all classes throughout the country.

Consequently it is rare to find nowadays the faithful service of former days, when servants regarded their employers as their friends, and identified themselves with their interests. Constant change, and the inclination to render as little service as will pass muster, to obtain luxurious surroundings and as much time off duty as possible, have brought about an entire change in the former relations of mistress and maid, of master and man, which were creditable to both. And the reason for the change must be attributed in part to each class. The employer, while he may permit high living, and even countenance wasteful extravagance, no longer maintains the same personal interest in his employees, being too absorbed in the pursuit of personal pleasure to concern himself with their affairs. Is it wholly surprising that they follow his example as far as in them lies? In the old days, landowners, with traditions handed down to them from feudal days, recognised that they owed certain duties to

their tenants and dependants, and took personal trouble to carry out what they conceived to be these duties. The modern plutocrat, as a rule, beyond arranging amply for his personal comfort, concerns himself not at all with those who minister to it.

In the middle classes also there is an increasing tendency for girls to shirk all the home duties which in former days they undertook. They, too, must have their ceaseless round of pleasure. The outdoor games and sports, which formerly were the recreation, are now the business of life, and who sees that the linen is mended, fresh flowers kept in the vases, or that the store cupboard is kept in order troubles them not one whit. Is it any wonder that when they enter a hospital for training they are not enduring, unselfish, and reliable?

It must also be remembered that a quarter of a century ago there were few attractions to a woman to enter a hospital for training. She fared hardly, she worked harder, and the consequence was those who offered themselves for training were mainly women of earnest purpose, keenly desirous of alleviating human suffering. Now many girls find in our well-appointed Nursing Homes more comforts than they have ever had before, and in the work of nursing a pleasant means of earning a livelihood; their motives are more mixed than in the days when the elimination of all but the hardest was the inevitable result of the system of training then in force.

We do not desire to return to those days. A reasonable amount of rest and recreation is good for, and the right of, all. Wholesome, well-cooked food is necessary for those who work hard. But we do plead for an ideal of simplicity. As nurses, we have to adapt ourselves to all conditions; therefore we should learn to limit our requirements, for if we are to command the confidence of the sick we must give them unselfish and devoted service. The calling we have chosen is an exacting one, and demands the best that is in us without stint.

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