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Editorial.

THE PROFESSIONAL MIND.

Nurses do well to claim for their calling the rank and status of a profession, for on no other plane will they maintain it at a high level of efficiency. It is plain that if they use their skill only as a means for self-support and money-making, both in themselves laudable objects, they inevitably fall short of the standard they should set before them. They need to keep their ideals high by insistence on the professional side of their work.

Again, the difference between a trade and a profession is essentially that the former is a thing which can be learnt once and for all. A workman at the end of his apprenticeship is proud to believe that he knows all that is worth knowing about his craft, and his pride is well founded. He has passed through an arduous training, and within certain well-defined limits he knows his business thoroughly.

This point of view is apt to be adopted by some nurses at the end of their period of probation. They are "trained nurses," they assert, and trained nurses they must remain. They uphold all methods in vogue in their training school as those which should be employed in perpetuity, and look with suspicion upon any more recently introduced, although these may be the inevitable outcome of fuller knowledge.

Trained in general principles which may be applied in a variety of ways they are, or should be, as well as in manual dexterity, but the essential difference between nursing and any trade or craft is this, it deals, not with mechanical matters, but with the human body, and, as medical and surgical science learn more of the mechanism of its wonderful and complicated organism, and are able to introduce new treatment,

based on additional knowledge, nursing must move on the same plane and adapt itself to new requirements. To claim for our knowledge that it is complete and final would be to give the death-blow to nursing efficiency.

To give only one illustration. Those who trained in the eighties will remember how in surgical wards the dressings were often prepared and placed on trays at the foot of each bed at ten o'clock, and there lay until the round of the house-surgeon and his assistants, which might be deferred for several hours. To adopt this method in the light of our present knowledge of micro-organisms would be criminal, and many other examples of a similar nature might be instanced.

The efficient nurse, then, must be one who keeps an open mind, who knows that no knowledge she possesses is final or complete, and that former beliefs may have to be discarded at any moment if the demand comes as the result of further scientific revelations.

She must therefore keep herself in touch with progress, and be ready to learn if need be from those younger than herself who have more recently worked in hospital wards in which, as a rule, new methods are first tried. To be a professional nurse it is essential to be progressive. To be unprogressive is to reduce our work to the level of an ordinary trade.

The older nurses can give the younger ones invaluable advice, the result of their accumulated experience; they can equally learn from them and the benefit will be mutual. There is this further distinction between a profession and a trade that, whereas in the latter a worker keeps trade secrets to himself as a commercial asset, the member of a profession is bound to declare and to share his knowledge with his colleagues for the common good.

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