

to be dreaded as it is they who minister to the sick most—when the modes of contamination were brought more in evidence, all had to be changed; the sordid wards, the furniture inlaid with dust, the methods of operation, the manner of surgical dressings, and, above all, and the most difficult thing of all—the *spirit* which reigned in medicine and surgery.

“The present bacteriological physicians and surgeons are the sons of the ‘Pasteurian Revolution.’ They exact hospitals shining with cleanliness and dressings free of microbes. The principal apparatus of the operating theatre is the steriliser.

“In those hospitals rebuilt to help these surgeons who are aseptic to the very tips of their fingers, to nurse these carefully isolated patients the old school nurse was no longer sufficient. Not that she was not an excellent creature, full of devotion to her work, and even most skilful in her trade, such as it was understood in those days. I have known them, these women, full of zeal and good will. They prepared in a most marvellous way the open work pieces of linen, the charpie, and made the linseed poultices as no one knows how to make them to-day. But they had not the ‘Pasteurian spirit,’ and they were not sufficiently educated to acquire it.

“In fact, this is the most important point: the first quality of a nurse is to be educated. She must possess not only professional instruction, but general education. In other words, nurses should be drawn from a stratum which has so far not produced them.

“What! they cry out, is it so difficult to become a nurse? Can they not succeed with a practical knowledge and an elementary education, with kindness, and precision in the carrying out of the doctor’s orders?

“I think it is not possible.

“He who succeeds best in his work is the one who is superior to his task.

“Nothing, for instance, seems simpler than to sterilise dressings. It seems sufficient to understand the manipulation of the tap of the apparatus and to be able to read the manumetre. Well, if the nurse charged with this possesses over and above a knowledge of microbes, of their resistance to heat, if she knows why the manumetre which indicates the pressure of steam also indicates the temperature, I should be more certain that the dressings which she is preparing are really aseptic.

“Do you think that the opening of the mind, which is the result of general culture, is useless to a nurse in the management of her patient? For this government really belongs to her from the instant physicians and surgeons have dis-

appeared till the following day. Should anything happen, what has the nurse to fall back upon except the knowledge and resources she already possesses?

“Do you think that if the nurse is a cultured, refined woman, the discipline, the whole tone of her wards will not be felt?

“Just now my friend Dr. Rist was telling us that he feared that ambition will arise amongst our highly educated nurses, for it seems that several of them have given up the nursing profession for the medical one. Well, even if this should happen more frequently do not let us complain if they are capable of rising to the higher profession. The immense change which is taking place in the recruiting of our nurses is the result of the evolution of medicine as well as moral and social changes.

“The nursing of the sick is no longer regarded as it was before. To our ancestors disease was an individual misfortune, and the victim seemed to them worthy of their help and charity. To nurse the sick was a work of piety, and those who became nurses were nearly always prompted by principles of piety and the hope of a future reward.

“To-day, we think that the illness of one member of society is the misfortune of the whole community. The large family is struck in the personality of the patient, she owes him help as to a dear one, for it is in the interest of all. To the idea of charity has joined the thought of solidarity, which raises at the same time the one who assists and the one who is assisted. Our nurses will then be animated by this spirit of solidarity, which, in ameliorating the intercourse of men, transforms them into charitable agents.

“There is another reason which has contributed to the changes which are taking place in the social position of nurses.

“In these days one has to be really rich to be able to live on one’s income. The constant decrease of revenue and the continual increase of expenditure oblige many people to work who would not have dreamt of doing so some years ago. The middle class, and that which includes small landowners, merchants as well as the professional classes, which are assuredly the most cultured and highly educated, have been obliged to modify their mode of living. The need to work has been forced on their sons and now it is being imposed on their daughters. Add to this the aspiration to independence and the wish to assert their individuality and personality, which animates most of them, and you will not be surprised to find that those young girls who wish to earn their own living are becoming more and more numerous.

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