

Charge to the Graduating Class of 1906 of the Provident Hospital Training School for Coloured Women.

By MISS HARRIET FULMER, Chicago.

It seems almost superfluous to add anything to the words of good advice that you have heard this evening, and I have now only a few brief sentences as a charge of encouragement to you as members of my own profession. And to say these few words to such a group of young women is at once a privilege and an honour, for are you not unique in the task you have set yourselves, not only in that you join the ranks of nursing to bring back to health the sick and soothe the last hours of the dying, but in that you are going forth to uplift your people and add one more testimony to show that neither race nor colour limits the usefulness of women of purpose and education and character. And as you go forth armed with these graces in addition to your professional training, you will find hundreds of hands and hearts stretched forth to welcome you. Look down the line of work for women and see if you find anything that opens up such a vast field of usefulness as this, your chosen work.

Besides the minor things of nursing, which your birthright as women pre-empted for you long ago, you gained what, in your three years of hospital life? Besides getting technical knowledge, you have become resourceful, cool-headed in emergency, methodical, disciplined, self-denying, and self-reliant. With these acquirements you would seem to be fortified against all trials that may come to you, and, while you must not forget that you enter a profession beset with temptations, if you maintain for yourselves a rigid discipline and serious-mindedness you become not only self-possessed inwardly, but to the public at large you are impressive examples of wise living.

You must be ever alert to prove that your Training School gives you not only the best technical training this country affords but the best character training as well. Not that we wish to bring to our ranks a doleful, long-faced, self-satisfied spirit, but neither have flippancy and shallowness and self-concern any part in the life within our gates. Nursing has gone past the "fad stage," past the "Angel of Mercy stage," past the mere "commercial occupation stage," and it is just now standing on the brink of becoming a profession, co-equal with medicine, an art inferior to none. With

the many splendid women coming out of the training schools every year for the last quarter of a century, why should we not by this time have taken our rightful place in the professions? Why should we still be feeling about with a sense of insecurity as to our position? It is a question well worth asking you as new recruits to ponder. Do not accept your diploma from Provident Hospital unless you accept all the responsibilities that go with it, and one of the greatest is that toward your fellow nurses. Do not think that you can say, "It doesn't matter what I do, I am only a tiny part of one [great body of women." That is just where we have all contributed more or less to our ill-defined place in the world. Please remember it does matter whether you belong to the State Association, to your own School Alumnae, whether you subscribe to nursing magazines, whether you own your own nursing books, whether you retire within yourself or keep abreast in the nursing world.

I think if every right-minded woman coming from the training schools all over the world today could be brought to realise that as *she* is so will her sister nurses be, there would be less chance of the unworthy creeping in, and less reason to drive us to the law to protect our own cause. You young women before me now can keep the standard of your profession the highest. My reputation depends upon you and yours upon me. What you do to your discredit does not affect you alone, it affects the whole body of women whose calling you have chosen. Just so long as there is one among us who is not imbued with the true dignity of her work, just so long will the whole army remain below the standard. Make yourself familiar, if you have not already, with every nursing problem of the day, and there are many.

In speaking to you I have tried to remember that you are a class of women who mayhap have had a surfeit of advice, and so my idea is only to touch upon that which will warn you of the shoals of the profession as I have found them in my life in the public nursing world. I have mingled with nurses of all schools, with all sorts and grades of patients, and I may safely say that the nurse who is above criticism is the one who is unswerving from the ethical side of her calling. If we could gather the statistics of failures and the complaints filed against nurses, they would not be the criticisms of her nursing skill—how she gave the bath, etc.—but of the lack of the indefinable something that must be required to furnish a well-trained nurse with a complete equipment. You may know anatomy and physiology, and may have given years of study to the theories

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