

The Mission of the Modern Nurse.

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A most able and up-to-date lecture was given in the Autumn, at the opening of the lectures of the municipal schools in Paris, by M. André Mesureur, and as many portions of it are of international interest and others may be taken to heart by any nurse in any part of the world, the following extracts translated into English are given:—

"The character of the mission of the modern nurse has altered under the influence of modern ideas; to the traditions of the past we must add the thoughts which must henceforth impose themselves on the hospital world, and on the nursing staffs more particularly . . . and it is precisely by the very reason of the personal, individual, and direct service devolving on nurses, that the features of this change should be marked by them in this profession so noble, but so little and so badly understood in France.

"Before considering the novelties which have altered its character, our pupils must make note of two old principles which have not lost their value. The personal qualities of a nurse, her character and her manner, merit consideration in the first place; the second principle is the necessity of a general professional education, founded on an assiduous practical training.

"It has been said that nowhere than in a hospital is there a better field for the development of the multiplicity of feminine qualities, and it was thought in the past that to renounce the world and to sacrifice oneself was sufficient to make of a woman a good nurse. Let us cut short the absurdity of such a theory. It is not a question of sacrifice, nor of renouncement, for devotion is no longer sufficient—though it still remains necessary. Woman has a most marvellous aptitude for this devotion which characterises the nurse.

"Women enter the nursing staff of hospitals under different influences. Some are drawn by an irresistible vocation; the majority become nurses because they come from families who traditionally belong to hospitals; parents or relatives have for generations served the *Assistance Publique*; the walls of their establishments are familiar to them; the young nurse knows that she will find within them friendly faces and that an honourable career awaits her.

"Others come to us because they need to earn their living. Life is very hard in the fields of Brittany, they have heard of the *Salpêtrière*,

they have learnt from their elders that a woman can find there an easy livelihood, where each one can have opportunities of making her qualities and aptitudes appreciated.

"And, finally, sometimes the probationer, who has crossed the threshold of the *Salpêtrière*, has entered with the hope of breaking down the ill-fate which made her commit mistakes, to forget the vicissitudes of the past, and to begin a new and serious life; and, as a matter of course, if she wishes it, once lost in this immense staff, placed in one of the scattered establishments of Paris, or sent to the Provinces, she can sever the evil ties and unfortunate relations of the past. She will feel herself sheltered because she will have in her hands a means of work, a home where she is no longer alone and lonely.

"This same one can, if she wishes it, become an excellent nurse. During her first six weeks of trial in the six different services recently instituted, and during her six months of probation she has every opportunity of earning for herself a reputation for kindness and devotion which is the hospital tradition. If the probationer is hard with the patient, or irritable with the child she must go. She will never make a good nurse, perhaps she will find elsewhere an occupation which will suit her, let her not waste her time with us nor encumber our wards.

"Humanity! This word perhaps too wide and too indefinite, does not imply excessive sentimentality and noisy manifestations. Humanity in a hospital is accomplished by a gesture, a look which would be imperceptible to the stranger, but which transmits itself to the sufferers and soothes their pain. This humanity manifests itself, continuously and evenly owing to the manner of life of the nurse, which soon becomes second nature to her. The good nurse is quickly known by an equable temper, easy and sympathetic manners, she accomplishes her duties without any trouble and with satisfaction and pleasure. There is a manner of walking through the ward which denotes the profound pity she feels for the patients. When she brings their meals she sees that everything is in its place, that the patient is in a comfortable position to take his food, and without any noise she arranges and re-adjusts his pillow and places his mug of milk within his reach. In the same thoughtful manner she will tidy up the bed of this one who has got uncovered and pick up the fallen handkerchief of the other. When the doctor speaks to her and asks her questions she avoids leaning on the bed and is never seen touching the bedclothes without cause.

"On visiting days—those unavoidable and

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