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Editorial.

SOCIAL WORK IN HOSPITALS.

The need for the extension of the work of hospitals in the homes of the patients, both of in-patients and out-patients, is one which has long been evident to the medical and nursing staffs. Directions may be given to them, but the physician or surgeon knows that while it is of the highest importance that these directions should be carefully followed, it is very unlikely that this will be done, both on account of the inability of the patients to grasp and carry out the instructions received intelligently, and also because owing to their environment such instructions are often quite impossible of fulfilment.

We have already given some notice in these columns of the work of the "Social Service Nurse" in connection with New York hospitals. Dr. Richard C. Cabot some years ago inaugurated similar work at the Massachusetts General Hospital, and a recent visit from him to Chicago has resulted in a beginning being made at the Cook County Hospital in that city. It is satisfactory to note that the need of such social service work is being increasingly appreciated, and that on October 1 a social service department was established at the Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, under the guidance of Dr. Charles P. Emerson, Miss Helen B. Pendleton, who has had experience of relief work in San Francisco, and also worked for nine and a-half years in connection with the Charity Organisation Society, Baltimore, having been appointed social worker.

So long ago as 1902, Dr. Emerson, who now supervises the new department, organised a board of medical students, who volunteered their services, until between fifty and sixty students were engaged in visiting poor families. Last spring it was felt that these

groups of workers should be brought more closely in touch with the Johns Hopkins Hospital and Mr. John M. Glenn, who is a trustee of the Hospital, and also well-known in the charitable world, was asked to name a trained worker to help to bring this about, with the result that Miss Pendleton was appointed. Her work will be to endeavour to help the outpatients to carry out the doctors' orders by giving attention to their diet, occupation, environment, and the general re-organisation of their home life, and she will put them in touch, where necessary, with the different organisations which can be utilised for their welfare.

Through the new department students and doctors will have an opportunity of learning the value of social knowledge in medical work. The districts of the Charity Organisation Society will still be utilised, but once a month there will be a clinical meeting in the hospital. The students who act as visitors will thus realise the importance of this work as part of their medical education.

We can conceive no more useful or more interesting field of work for a nurse, with the necessary gifts, than that of social worker in connection with a hospital. The need and usefulness of such work is so evident that the only wonder is that it has not been inaugurated long since. We hope that before long every hospital of importance in this country will have its social worker. Once such an officer is appointed it will be found that her work is quite invaluable. To be a success the social worker must have a knowledge of, and real sympathy with the poor. She must acquaint herself with relief and other agencies concerned in promoting the welfare of the people. She must possess tact so that she may go in and out of the homes of the poor, not as an undesired official, but as their welcomed friend and helper.

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