

should be made before mortgaging one's body to such "Shylocks" as chloral and opium.

The importance of work for all cannot be over-estimated; but the work done by women must be wisely done, and change of occupation and recreation must be considered not only as a pleasure but a duty. The cultivation of the mind of women must not be at the expense of the body. Hand in hand with mental culture must bodily culture go if disaster is to be avoided.

PRIVATE NURSING.

A PAPER READ BEFORE THE BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION,

BY HELEN FOGGO-THOMSON.

I HAVE undertaken the task of addressing you upon a matter of such interest to us all as that of Private Nursing with pleasure, but at the same time with considerable diffidence, from a consciousness of my inability to deal adequately with the subject, and a knowledge that many who are present could do so much better than I can. I must beg you, therefore, to extend your greatest indulgence to those shortcomings which you will not fail to mark.

I should not, however, have ventured to read a paper at all, but for one consideration, and that is, that we are an Association of practical Nurses who meet to discuss practical subjects, and to further our common objects. I think it is most important, whether we have literary skill or not, we should all of us take every opportunity of relating and comparing our individual experiences of the difficulties, and points of doubt or special interest, that we meet with in our work, and of freely discussing any suggestions of reform and improvement that may occur to us. I hope, therefore, that you will regard any views which I may express in this paper rather as suggestions for your consideration than as dogmatic assertions. Different people not only have different experiences, but they see them in a different light, and it is only by looking at questions from all sides that we can rightly estimate their weight and importance.

As we all know, the Nursing profession is still in its infancy, and it is only of recent years that special training has been seriously expected in a Private Nurse. Formerly a certain amount of empirical experience was all that was looked for, and this was too often associated with a roughness of manner and deportment which would not have been tolerated in a domestic servant. In this respect we have made rapid strides, and though

even now the training and skill of the Private Nurse may often leave much to be desired, I do not think any profession can show a greater advance in the personal qualities of its members than is seen by comparing the average Nurse of to-day with her predecessor of the last generation. So marked is this improvement that there is a real danger lest some should flatter themselves that they have reached perfection. Those, however, who know most of the subject are keenly aware that there is still abundant need for improving the training, the knowledge, and the efficiency of Private Nurses as a body.

Our advance as a profession has not kept pace with our progress as individuals; indeed, the former has been little enough, but we have made a beginning. We have our journals which can speak in the name of Nurses as a body, and this Association is a great step in the direction of enabling us to act in concert for the general good of our calling.

It is to united action that we must look for the improvement of the general condition of Nurses; for increasing their professional usefulness; for securing them the due reward of their labour; for ameliorating the conditions under which they work; for redressing the grievances from which they undoubtedly suffer. It is to these matters that I especially desire to invite your attention to-night.

In directing my remarks only to the consideration of subjects from the Nurses' point of view, I do not wish it to be thought that we are for one moment unmindful of the welfare of the general public, which, indeed, it is our interest and privilege, as well as our duty, to consider; but in all the questions which I propose to discuss I regard the interests of the general public and of Nurses as absolutely and completely identical. The sums which the public are willing to pay for our services are, I believe, sufficient if they are fairly distributed, and in everything which contributes to our greater skill and better education the public derive advantages scarcely inferior to those we reap ourselves. There must always be some agency to bring Nurses and the public together, and on the character of this agency hinges, as I hope to show, every element of the problem which I have enunciated. This want has been mainly supplied hitherto by Private Nursing Institutions, which introduce the Nurse to the public, and pay her a fixed salary, taking the profits of her labour, and the risk of her non-employment. The management of these institutions is, therefore, of vital importance to us, and is a question that should engage our earnest attention, for while in some the management is satisfactory, in others it is very much the reverse.

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