

endless opportunities of satisfying it, more perhaps than we can quite make use of.

No one now suggests that the whole duty of women is to sit by the hearth and bake cakes, and the problem of the future is how she is adequately to fill the larger sphere and yet at the same time not to allow those cakes to get burned as happened upon the only recorded occasion when man endeavoured to combine the consideration of public affairs with that domestic art.

But with you nurses there is no such problem; your public work has the first and only call upon your time and attention, and that work is of the utmost importance to the State, for its chief aim is to fit others to become equal to and to make the most of their chances and opportunities, to use your professional skill and that personal influence which you can exercise, whether in hospital or in the private home, under such extraordinarily favourable circumstances, so as to increase the physical and moral efficiency of every human being to whom you minister. As you know, progress has two sides—one the improvement of environment and opportunity, and the other the improvement of the individual, so that he or she may be able to make the most of the increased possibilities of life.

During the last fifty years we have made great progress in the first direction. Obstacles have been cleared wholesale from the path of the individual; houses, towns, villages have been rendered more healthy; the conditions of labour have improved; leisure has increased; education, amusements, and libraries have been placed within the reach of all, and in this direction our speed shows no sign of slackening. It is, therefore, all the more important that, in the other direction, the improvement of the individual, progress should be equally rapid, and it is in this connection, which I think we may describe as the tougher job, that you nurses can do so much.

In the first place, there can be no greater obstacle to the usefulness of the individual, or to his power of making the most of life and opportunity, than bodily infirmity. As illness is a great deal more impartial in its incidence than modern budgets, it often happens that it is the lives which might be most valuable to their country which are impaired by physical infirmity. It is, therefore, always of great importance to the community that these ineffectives should be reduced to a minimum; that disease and infirmity should be responsible for no mute, inglorious notes, and it is to this end that your work contributes, whether it takes the form of school nursing, preventive work in schools, or of teaching in the district, and

obviating any permanent damage to the human machine. But, of course, the nurse does much more than this. As a social worker—and I believe there is no social work that equals that of the district nurse, as she strengthens the bonds of society where they are weak, and she is, I believe the only perfectly jointed link between the leisured and richer classes and the poorer and more unenlightened ones—it is often through her alone that the poorer homes of this country are brought into contact with culture, refinement, and a higher standard of civilisation. And yet, because she enters these homes as a working woman, because her superiority is disguised by her working dress, because her invidious attacks on ignorance, unhealthy conditions, and moral inertia, as masked by her professional work, and rendered acceptable by relief, hope, and sympathy, she has unrivalled opportunities of fulfilling her mission and helping the individual to rise to the level of his opportunities. And in all this work I need not tell this audience that the nurse is helped immeasurably by belonging to a great profession which has already gathered around it the noblest traditions of public service. And yet it is only within recent years that nurses have developed that professional conscience. Even now, there are hundreds of nurses who take no interest in the larger interests of their profession, and who feel no responsibility for its corporate welfare. Such nurses are not living the full citizen life, for they are neglecting the way by which their individual and collective usefulness may be enhanced. You cannot delegate to anybody else the duty of maintaining the prestige of your profession, on which so much depends, or its standard of training. Everyone else, even the managers of our great training schools, have other interests to serve, other persons to consider, and you cannot trust the public; they have not the knowledge to make them an authority on the subject. Besides many of them are convinced adherents of the born nurse theory, and believe in the direct inspiration of medical and surgical knowledge. If you want to achieve what other professions have won, to set landmarks between yourselves and all other qualified persons who have not entered your profession, you can only do it by securing the loyalty and active co-operation of every one of your members. You have too many vested interests, too many superstitions, too many prejudices to overcome to tolerate any drones amongst yourselves.

Now, it is obvious that if the nurse is to be equal to all the calls upon her as a citizen, as a sister, as a social worker who is a member

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