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EDITORIAL.

THE NURSING SPIRIT.

Five-and-twenty years ago the technical training in many hospitals left much to be desired; the hours in the wards gave little time for study; and the limited number of the staff, and, the consequent work at full speed of each member, did not permit of much practical teaching being given in the wards by the Sisters. Yet the training schools turned out some splendid nurses in those days, and the reason was in part that hospital life had few attractions to offer to those who did not take up nursing in the right spirit. Those who desired the opportunity of nursing the sick, and were not afraid of plenty of hard work, found these ready to their hand. But those who merely desired to support themselves in a more or less pleasant way, soon tired of hard work, hard fare, scant sleep, and few recreations. Consequently those who emerged from the training schools, as certificated nurses, represented the survival of the fittest.

Does the present day nurse make the fullest use of her opportunities? With better teaching, shorter hours, better food and comfortable quarters, one would naturally suppose that she would be fresher, and the quality of her work would be superior to that of her predecessors. It is doubtful whether she comes brighter to her work, because she has many outside interests which her harder-worked colleague in the eighties did not permit herself.

Theatres, concerts, golf, and other amusements share with the sick the affections of many a modern nurse. Off-duty time looms almost as large as the work in the wards with many nurses, but nursing is an exacting divinity, demanding whole-hearted allegiance from her devotees, and refusing to be regarded merely as a means of making money

which opens the door to pleasant recreations. We do not intend to imply that nurses should indulge in no recreations; they are all the better for them; but these should be lightly held, and willingly surrendered, if the welfare of the sick demands it, and if they are inspired by the true nursing spirit they will do so, ungrudgingly; and before all things it is necessary that we should cherish that spirit, otherwise—however technically perfect—a nurse can never rise above the level of mediocrity. As there is all the difference in the world between an actress merely word perfect only in her part, and an inspired Siddons, between a voice mechanically perfect, but lacking in soul, so there is a difference which the sick are quick to feel between the nurse whose work however skilful is not instinct with human sympathy, and the one whose skill and tenderness are the outward expression of her inmost desire to serve the sick to the utmost of her power.

It would be impossible for such a book as the story of the Cottage Hospital, which we review in another column, to have any chance of interesting the reading public if that public held the opinion of trained nurses to-day which many deserve. That there is a sordid, seamy, pleasure-loving side of our profession is evident, and when once nursing is dethroned from her high position and relegated to the second place, every kind of disaster may follow, for her claims are supreme and she brooks no rival.

The true nursing spirit not only inspires a woman's devotion to the sick, but includes in its catholic sympathies all humanity, and very specially does it seek after means of helping fellow workers. The twentieth century should see this sense of professional sympathy warmly encouraged by those responsible for the tone of our training schools. The time has come when we must govern our corporate life by a high code of ethics.

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