

sum for the prevention of the spread of small-pox. During the winter of 1908-1909 a woman (presumably a physician) definitely diagnosed as trachoma the many cases of sore eyes among the Indians.

One other disease, even more deadly in its onslaught among reservation Indians than trachoma, is tuberculosis. The mortality from this cause alone for the fiscal year ending June, 1914, was 31.83 per cent. of the total death-rate, or more than double that of Caucasians born in this country. The alarming number of deaths from this scourge is causing no little anxiety to people who are interested in the Indians, and every combative method known to modern science is being employed to stamp it out.

Health conditions in the schools are being given a great deal of consideration, and an effort is being made to have the children live in the most hygienic environment possible. The importance of cleanliness, fresh air and sunshine, nourishing food at regular intervals, well-ventilated sleeping-rooms, suitable clothing, regularity of habits, the use of separate towels, drinking cups, &c., are all being given attention. This is all very well and as it should be, but it only grazes the surface of things.

To strike at the root of the trouble, as it exists, the problem will have to be taken up in the homes and fought vigorously. Tuberculosis is essentially a house-bred disease, one with which the Indian, in his former transitory, out-of-doors mode of living, did not have to contend, and one with which, in his new environment, he has not learned to cope.

Now just a few words about nurses of Indian blood. At present there are seven of these women in the employ of the United States Government. I am told that they are all graduates of recognized training schools, and doing efficient work. One can readily understand that if they are well educated, well trained, and possessed of sufficient courage, persistence, and devotion to duty and race, our Indian women ought to be a strong factor in the Reservation Nursing Service, for they not only have the advantage of knowing at first hand how their people feel, and think, and live, but they have no mistrust to overcome.

The Indian private duty nurses are many more in number, and, while very little seems to be known of them, representatives are to be found in almost every large city, working shoulder to shoulder with the nurses of other races. Many of our women have fought their way to success in this particular branch of

endeavour under the most trying circumstances, and the only reason I can attribute for more not being known of them is that thus far none of our women of superior education have been attracted to the nursing profession. I am sorry to have to admit this, but it is true. I believe, however, that the majority of Indian nurses are orderly, painstaking, capable, conscientious women.

I have previously mentioned the earnest effort that is being put forth by the Government and our friends for the betterment of the Indian people generally, and I have no doubt but that all this exertion on the part of others will do something to improve the race in the next generation; but I am firmly convinced that nothing like satisfactory results will ever be obtained until the Indians themselves are thoroughly impressed with the seriousness of their own problem, for it is and ever will be a problem, characterized by ignorance, degeneracy, disease and death, as long as the Indians are forcibly confined within fixed limits, away from material contact with civilization, and clothed, and fed, and thought for and pauperized generally.

The salvation of any people must come from within, and until they have been taught and firmly grasp the idea of responsibility, responsibility not only to themselves but to the communities in which they live, and to the country at large; until they appreciate the fact that the country owes no physically and mentally sound man anything more than the chance to *earn* a living, the combined efforts of physicians, nurses, field-matrons, and the countless other employees of the Service, will be of little avail. Responsibility is the key to the situation; and by responsibility I mean "the ability to meet the requirements that morality, civilization, and humanity, demand of man; the ability to protect self, to support self, to contribute to progress; the ability to help those who depend upon you; the ability to make the world need you."

Particularly should nurses who choose work in Indian fields be women of unusual capabilities, and actuated only by the highest motives. In addition to the many virtues and accomplishments with which other employees in this great social uplift should be endowed the nurse should have limitless patience, and a broad charity for the weaknesses of her fellow man, for, as is the case in all forms of welfare work, she will find every disease born of unfit social conditions. She will glean her reward in helping to reclaim a people who have become pauperised and diseased through a social system that has been forced upon them.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)