

## HOSPITAL SOCIAL SERVICE.

## II

The founder of this great pioneer work at the Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, U.S.A., was Dr. Richard C. Cabot, a distinguished member of his profession, and of the Hospital Staff. In the ninth annual report of the work, the founder, in an illuminating article under the heading "What does Medical Social Service mean?" gives the following concise explanation:—"Nine years ago we asserted that the hospital patient's illness was often merely an incident in his *real trouble*—his ignorance, recklessness, poverty, discouragement, feeble-mindedness, loneliness, &c. We organized Social Service in order to serve the patient in his *real trouble*, whatever that might be. Now his real trouble is understandable and helpable only when you know: (1) His bodily state (medical diagnosis, and especially prognosis); (2) his mental state; (3) his bodily environment (work, wages, food, clothing, housing, &c.); (4) his mental environment—the influence (good or bad) of his family, friends, enemies, neutral companions." Nothing could better explain the why and the wherefore of Hospital Social Service, or better indicate the lines upon which it is worked at the hospital of its initiation. It all implies of necessity the great principle of *co-operation*. Dr. Cabot says in another part, with reference to the problem presented by a whole family:—

"We co-operated with—

- (a) The local Anti-Tuberculosis Society.
- (b) The local Associated Charities.
- (c) The local Board of Health.
- (d) The local Overseers of the Poor.
- (e) The local priest.
- (f) The State Board of Charities."

It will therefore be seen that the Hospital Social Service Department is used as a great centre of personal service for the sick and afflicted in mind and body. Dr. Cabot particularly emphasises the *personal* element, which he calls the basis of social work, in contradistinction from what he calls the *impersonal* work, such as "bandaging a leg, or administering a dose of digitalis." I was particularly impressed by the knowledge that a very perfect system of co-operation with various agencies is in operation here for dealing with people either insane or threatened with insanity. They are classified as: (1) the insane, (2) the feeble-minded, (3) the psychoneurotic. Miss Cannon tells us in her book that the Hospital Social Service Department has undertaken the most concentrated social work for these unfortunates. English hos-

pitals, please copy; by doing so, it is conceivable that many who now enter asylums for the insane might be mercifully delivered from that fate. She also utters these hopeful words:—"The new approach to the problem of the feeble-minded has come with the development of Hospital Social Service." (The italics are mine.) In speaking of the constructive side of the work, she says:—"Good social work is constructive, and the social worker must be constructively imaginative." It can be plainly seen that there are many special spiritual graces necessary for a successful social worker. The spirit of understanding (imagination), tact (the touch faculty), sympathy, insight, and a lucid intelligence.

There is much of interest that could still be told about this beneficent service, but space in this journal is so precious I dare not trespass upon it unduly; but brief mention must be made of the fact that it was Dr. Charles P. Emerson who in 1902 first "recognized that truly effective medical training must include an understanding of the background of the patients' lives and something of their standards of living." The Massachusetts General Hospital has materialized this proposition, and at the present time the Harvard University medical students are systematically instructed—and that by a woman, namely, Miss Cannon—in the methods of Hospital Social Service as part of their curriculum during their fourth year. In like manner, nurses receive three months' training; the great value of it can scarcely be over-estimated. The work is constructive and to some extent preventive, and Miss Cannon looks hopefully forward to the time when it will be preventive in a much greater degree. This can only come with the better education of the masses, and surely with a greater sense of responsibility in the rulers. A very valuable diagram, which came into my possession by the kindness and courtesy of Miss Cannon, gives to thoughtful observers an excellent idea of the numerous branches and activities of this truly magnificent organization. It is worth crossing the Atlantic (when submarines have ceased from troubling) to investigate. My impression of it and its usefulness is ineffaceable.

BEATRICE KENT.

The Editor desires to express her warm thanks for 42 bags of lavender received from Miss B. Lincoln, Ringwood, dainty and delicious. They have been sent to the Sir Frederick Milner Recuperative Hospital, Hampstead, and the Military Hospital, Endell Street, W.C.

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