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EDITORIAL.

THE DIGNITY OF SERVICE.

The shadows deepen around us with the continuance of the War, and, as a profession pledged to the service of mankind, it is well to ask ourselves whether we are doing all in our power to help to lighten the sorrow of the world.

It is our legitimate pride and joy that, by the skill acquired in the years of peace, we had in our hands to offer a gift most precious when war was declared. Never before have we realized so keenly the need of thoroughness, and of accurate knowledge, the value of deftness—learnt in the course of much practice—the importance of discipline, the quiet confidence of the self-reliance which is the fruit of competence. Our sick and wounded in their extremity needed all the dexterity, all the tenderness we could place at their disposal, and, so far as trained nurses were permitted to use them, these gifts were freely exercised.

But more was, and is, still demanded. Not only technical skill is required of the trained nurse, though how much suffering this has prevented and alleviated can never be estimated, but, when medical and nursing skill have done all within their power, we are still needed at the bedside of the dying, and it is to the watchful figure of the trained nurse that the eyes of the dying are turned; to her the last messages for loved ones are confided, on her they depend for support, as the silver cord is loosened and the brave spirit leaves the body to return to God who gave it.

The ministry of nurses in the night watches, when so often they are alone with the dying and the dead, is a duty faithfully performed, the rare beauty of which is known only to the Angels of God.

But that ministry is not accomplished

when the dying eyes are closed. The true nurse realizes that she has a duty also to the bereaved. Often, indeed, a private nurse is sent for to a house of mourning, and, if she can rise to her opportunities, she may have the joy of knowing that her presence has proved a strength, and stay, and consolation.

The skill to bind up broken hearts is a special gift, but in very many houses of mourning to-day, grateful thoughts follow the trained nurse, who has passed on to fresh and urgent duties, but who proved herself a tower of strength in a time of trouble and distress.

This power, which some nurses possess in so marked a degree, and in which others seem almost totally lacking, is not the growth of a day, but is gradually and almost unconsciously developed, and it is just because the value of a nurse's work in this connection is so great, the need for it so urgent, that it behoves each one to spare no pains to acquire a gift which will add to the value of her technical services, so that her mere presence in the house of sorrow has a calming, steadying, uplifting influence.

There are many nurses who to-day are in demand because peace seems to follow in their train, and the quieting of jangled nerves to result from their touch, who look back upon the time when they first entered hospital wards, and remember how helpless they felt when confronted by bitter trouble, for the relief of which their help is now so often sought. They remember, too, the lessons they learnt from Sisters and Staff Nurses, who said perhaps but little, but who taught those apt to learn by the most potent of means, the power of silent example.

And they give thanks for the beauty of holiness and the dignity of service thus unfolded before them.

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