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EDITORIAL COMMENT



THE NURSE PHARISEE

IN our last JOURNAL we made mention in a general way of certain obstacles that seem to be in the path of progress, and we reserved until the last what we consider to be the most serious of them all—the nurse Pharisee.

In the news department of the JOURNAL from month to month, and in the various *alumnæ* magazines, are reported the appointment of graduates from our leading schools as superintendents of hospitals or as heads of departments in institutions all over the country. Some of these women we never hear of again after the appointment is announced, although they remain in hospital positions. Others come more and more to the front in all lines of progressive work that have to do with hospitals and nurses. They are the leaders in thought and in service, in organization, in state registration, in philanthropic movements of all kinds. In many instances their reputation is more than local. The other group of women, perhaps with educational opportunities, both preliminary and professional, of the very highest, with far greater opportunity, content themselves with performing the duties which are confined to the four walls of the hospital with which they are connected, and for which they are paid. Their attitude toward all nursing interests outside their daily round is one of indifference if not of superiority. They seem to thank God that they are not as others. They fail to appreciate that with greater knowledge comes greater obligation of service to others.

It is often the woman of limited education and moderate equipment who, by reason of her keen interest and warm heart, leaves a trail of progress, inspiration, and enthusiasm wherever she goes.

Those women who, now in increasing numbers, go into new fields and fail to meet their professional obligations, are among our most stubborn

problems. Not only are the hospital and the community losers, but they are turning out, year after year, classes of the same kind of nurses as themselves, ignorant of the tremendous problems of the nursing world, interested only in their personal work and its remuneration. It is only when such a pupil gets pushed out into the world that she wakes up to an interest in the things that should have been made familiar to her while in training. To graduate pupils without public spirit or interest in public affairs is as injurious as to graduate them without a knowledge of the infectious nature of tuberculosis.

The only way that suggests itself to us for getting this type of superintendent out of her narrow circle is in the organization of local superintendents' societies, which such women will be almost compelled to join, because of public sentiment, and so come in touch with their fellow workers. That such local associations prove an inspiration is being demonstrated in many places, but even these will not reach them all, and the responsibility goes back to the heads of the large schools in which the majority of the women who go into executive work are trained.

ANOTHER TYPE

In contrast to the type of woman above described, no better example could be found of the nobler type than is presented in the little sketch of Lillian G. Light in our official department. Here was a woman with no higher equipment, no greater opportunities than most of us have, who lived her life quietly, yet fulfilled her obligations as a woman, a nurse, and a citizen. She was little known to the nursing world in general, even her closest friends did not realize the extent of her efforts, but after her death we find a whole city rising to call her blessed and to honor her memory by a fitting memorial. No death reported in our columns has brought to our office a greater number of voluntary and heart-felt tributes.

With the exception of two short services as night superintendent, Miss Light's nursing career was that of a private nurse in her home town. Yet she did not feel herself limited to narrow bounds, and when an epidemic of smallpox occurred, she volunteered to care for the 130 patients in the Municipal Hospital and brought them safely through. When she saw the need of district nursing, she did what she could as an individual to care for the poor, and went to work single-handed to interest the Woman's Club to establish a visiting nurse association.

We often hear that private duty nurses have no time for anything aside from their own work—here was one who made herself so thoroughly