

Nursing -

As a Profession for Women.

Gertrude Julia Havens.

Nursing - As a Profession for Woman.

Introduction.
Why Should Women Choose a Profession.
The Kind of a Profession for Women.
History of Nursing.
The Need of Trained Nurses.
The Requirements for a Nurse.
Conclusion.

Nursing As a Profession for Women.

There is constant agitation in these times about women entering the professions, while a century ago it was thought of little and talked of less. There are many reasons for this agitation, and it is now generally acknowledged, that it is right, and not only right, but economic for her to do so.

One of the first reasons is because she can then be self supporting, and independent. Unhappy youthful marriages, and marriages just for a home will not take place when the women are capable of making homes for themselves, and the ignominy so often attached to the term "old maid", loses its sting when that same "old maid" can support

herself and others by her earnings, and when the sting is lost there will not so many girls rush into marriage, simply to avoid being a "cipher in humanity." A second reason is, that there are, in the thickly populated countries, more women than men, and many of these men will remain single, so leaving many women dependent upon their own exertions for a home. What shall these women do? Lead lives of wretched, virtuous, dependence on friends or relatives, or dissolute independence, where character and womanly modesty, are made merchandise of to feed and clothe the body, of herself, and perhaps of dependent relatives? No! she may now enter the professions. It is to this class that these opportunities have come as a gift of love from her Maker. A third reason is that men will not hesitate so long to take the responsibility of a family, if the wife can, in case of the failure of health of the husband and father, or of his death, care for herself and her children. And women

have time now to become moderately proficient in a profession. Much of the spinning, weaving, cutting, sewing and bleaching that occupied the time of our grandmothers is done now by machinery, much better and cheaper; while the bake-shops, and laundries, are taking from the woman of today much of the drudgery of home keeping, leaving her time, that if rightly used may make her independent, though none the less womanly.

Granting that she may take a profession, what shall it be? There are many now existing that she may enter, with profit to her employer, and credit to herself; and there is a vast field opening in specialized work, in which new paths are continually being found, and more are quickened to see them, and the choice bit of pasture to which they lead, than are the women. The only thing she needs to guard against in choosing a path, either new, or old, is the danger of selecting one too rough for her feet, and where in the climbing, she will have to lay

aside her garment of womanliness. She must not attempt masculine labor. In countries, as Russia, where women have been compelled to do this, "they have become common and coarse, ugly and dirty; and give birth to ugly, diseased, and deformed children." She must seek some profession that will suit her woman's strength, and give opportunity for the development of her woman's instinct, love of home and children; ready sympathy; and the desire to be helpful. Then let it be something on which the time and money spent will not, as is often the case, be wasted, or worse than wasted, if she wishes to give up her profession for a home of her own. No girl has a right to say, "I like the profession, and if I take it and make any thing of my self in it, I can never marry, therefore I will never marry." That is only a few steps removed from "taking the veil", and may prove disastrous to her own happiness and that of some one else. But this class is rare. Most women expect to

marry and so cannot give their whole energy to something that will be dropped entirely, if she does. This seems to limit woman's work, and so it does, but it is only a limitation that the Creator has placed upon her, and it is only by obeying these limitations that woman can receive the full pleasure, the Creator has reserved for her alone. There are, however many professions she may enter that would be of lasting good to humanity, and a financial benefit to herself, and one of these is nursing.

Perhaps of all professions entered by woman this most nearly fills the above requirements. The practice of systematic nursing is old, but for centuries gained attention very slowly. We have no account of it in the history of the world earlier than the time of ancient Hellas, and a little later in Rome, and these were intended only for slaves, gladiators, and soldiers. The sick citizens of the poor families finding ready sympathy and care in the homes of the rich. In Greece as

early as the period of the Solon. Those who were injured in battle were cared for at the public expense. The earliest hospitals that will compare in any way with those of the present, where the sick are systematically cared for, were built by the Buddhist, the king of Ceylon founding one in the fifth century B. C. There were eighteen in regular working order, in the second century B. C. Hospitals were also founded in the time of the early Mexican Civilization. The first Christian hospitals were founded in the second century A. D. in Asia Minor and Persia. At the time of the Crusades a large and effective order for the relief of the sick was organized called the "Hospital Brothers". In 1204 a hospital was established on the old Tiber bridge at Rome and called the order of the Holy Ghost. Soon after the Pope made all such institutions in the Empire subject to this. It was strictly secular and large fortunes were gained by those who were allowed to enter the order. The earliest woman's

name found connected with this great work was that of Elizabeth, daughter of Andrew II of Hungary, who founded the order of St. Elizabeth. Their first intention was to care for women only, but the wars found them giving aid and comfort on the battle field. Many other orders of men were founded, but in 1617 the order of the "Sisters of Mercy" was founded by Louise De Marillac. The orders founded and carried on by women were more true to their purpose than those organized by men, as the men too often used their influence to gain power and fortune for themselves or the church. The modern nursing institutions outside of the Catholic Church are independent of creed or dogma, and care alike for rich and poor, heathen and Christian, and are carried on largely by women, usually under the supervision of a staff of physicians. The first regular training school for nurses was founded in Germany in 1883. Since then many schools have been established in all parts of the civilized world, and many books written for

their instruction. Many branches have sprung up as the "Deaconesses", the "Red Cross Society", and "Fresh Air Companies" in which the services of trained nurses are in constant demand, besides their work in regular hospitals and private families.

But the need is felt more keenly, perhaps by the physicians than by any other class. With a critical case they cannot but feel much anxiety in leaving it in the care of over anxious members of the family, or some old time nurse, "winked prematurely, thinned out by temper, contrary by nature, or fattened in the course of their useful (?) career, complacent and drowsy while every thing is going well, incompetent and snappish when danger required work and sufficiency, always ready to have their regular meals served upstairs by the help of the house, always willing to spend their time between rocking a cradle, and speaking of their long experience, sleeping ten hours, talking gossip all day, and drinking eleven cups of coffee in the twenty four hours". The

testimony of one physician is the testimony of all when he says, "the results of the best physicians have vastly improved since their cases have been in the hands of trained nurses. This is true in both private houses and in hospitals. The physicians have begun to feel safe in regard to many of our cases only since we could rely on the co-operation of a trained nurse."

Private families are beginning to feel this need more slowly, but they do feel it, and the services of a competent nurse are in constant demand at from one dollar a day, to twenty five dollars per week, with board and washing. Any other profession at once so womanly and so remunerative could hardly be found. "This study lies also directly in their path as prospective wives and mothers, and this alone would furnish sufficient reason for it. A woman of superior gifts who had studied medicine, a profession closely allied to nursing, told me that the mere domestic use of her knowledge had more than repaid her for all the trouble it had cost."

There is much objection to it because of its draught on woman's nerves and strength. It is hard work, but an energetic, healthy, woman likes hard work as well as her brother, and, in a profession where endurance is needed, is much better fitted than he. To enter a hospital the girl must be ordinarily healthy, and in the hospitals I have visited the rosy cheeks, plump forms, and bright eyes of the girls, were worthy of special notice. Perhaps in no profession is there so much stress laid on the necessity of caring for one's own health, and at the same time the girl is taught how to do it. The idea that any one who can read and write can learn to nurse is rapidly losing ground, and girls of wealthy intellectual families, with college educations are filling the lists. A good general education, and the ability and willingness to learn, is one of the prime essentials. Constantly thrown with all classes of people, with all kinds of dispositions she must be able to adapt herself easily to any position, and have

that love "that suffereth long and is kind, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil," indeed she must be,

"A perfect woman nobly planned
To warn, to comfort, to command."

The gentle ministry of nursing is a gate that opens into a broad field of usefulness, and a garden that yields beautiful flowers of love, and fruits of thankfulness, and "Who is it think you, who stands at the gate of this garden alone waiting for you. Had you ever hear of a Madeline, who went down to the garden in the dawn and found One waiting at the gate whom she supposed to be the gardener? Have you not sought Him often; sought Him in vain all through the night; sought Him in vain at the gate of the old garden where the fiery sword is set? He is never there but at the gate of this garden He is waiting always, waiting to take your hand—ready to go down to see the fruits of the valley, to see whether the vine has flour-

ished and the pomegranate budded.
There you shall see with him the little
tendrils of the vines that his hand is
guiding."

Shall not we,
meant by God to be his terrestrial angels,
hasten gladly on his errands, and
with the aid of the Great Physician bind
the wounds of both heart and body? And
when man pays us money for our min-
istering, that which he holds dear, shall
we not thank God for the opportunity He
has given us of being womanly, useful,
and independent?