

POLICEWOMANSHIP—A POSSIBLE AND LOGICAL PROFESSION FOR NURSES.

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AN interesting and unique feature about Policewomanship, the new profession for women, is that it attracts to it trained women from many other professions. So broad is a policewoman's field of service that there is a place in the ranks where she labors to prevent crime and protect children, girls, and women against crime, for women workers who have been teachers, social workers, business women, industrial workers, and last but not least, trained nurses. In fact when the first civil service examination for the position of policewoman in New York City was announced by the Municipal Civil Service Commission, it was stated among the requirements that "graduation from a recognized school for trained nurses will be considered a desirable qualification."

Hence my subject, Policewomanship—A Possible and Logical Profession for Nurses—is not a mere fantastic title, it is a very live and true fact, worthy of the attention and thoughtful consideration of those in the nursing profession who are looking for new worlds to conquer.

An analysis of the reasons why trained nurses are sought as likely material for the making of fine policewomen will serve to demonstrate some of the vital facts about the policewoman and her work.

In the first place, a good policewoman must be a trained worker who understands what she is doing and is fitted by education and experience to act with reason and judgment. Surely the thorough training that a nurse receives, equips her splendidly in these respects. Furthermore, a good policewoman must know how to take and obey orders, and here again a nurse's training teaches her some basic principles of police work.

As a nurse one is constantly brought in contact with people who are in trouble. A nurse's professional attitude and tact in handling cases are her valuable assets. As a policewoman the same attributes make for success.

A nurse must have health, endurance, physique, all of which are equally important requisites for a policewoman.

And finally the knowledge that a nurse acquires along medical lines is a factor that qualifies her above all else to cope with the problems that a policewoman is daily called upon to handle. Many violators of the law in the cases of children, girls and women are insane, feeble-minded, degenerate. A nurse's training not only enables her to recognize these misfits, but teaches her how to deal with them scientifically.

One of the biggest problems that the policewoman faces is the girl problem, and invariably this problem is linked up in some way with matters pertaining to a far more difficult human equation, the sex problem. Before the advent of policewomen a girl was obliged to tell her story, no matter how harrowing were the details, to men officers. That fact alone has probably done more to further the policewoman movement than any other single circumstance. We need policewomen to handle the cases of children, girls and women, and we particularly need women protective officers who are capable of discussing intelligently and understandingly with girls and women the vital facts of life and who is better fitted for such an office than the trained nurse?

It is characteristic of the nursing profession to-day that its members are extending their activities into new fields of social service. Fifty years ago when the profession was practically in its infancy, trained nursing was confined mainly to hospital spheres. Now every important social service organization working for the improvement of social conditions, not to mention the great industries, has among its staff trained nurses who serve not merely as field workers, but in executive capacities as well.

Policewomanship with its great ideals of Crime Prevention and Protection offers just the kind of social service opportunity that is in line with the standards of modern nursing and modern preventive medicine. Moreover, Disease and Crime are closely allied. In fact, in my opinion, Crime is a disease or rather a criminal is physically, mentally or spiritually a sick person. So firm is my belief in this that were it in my power, I would actually send the majority of the hundreds of cases that I handle and observe to hospitals for treatment instead of to prisons and other institutions for punishment.

Recently in a message to a large representative and progressive group, the National Conference of Women, assembled at Southport, England, to discuss the important subject, "The Need of Women Police," I summarized the policewoman's Crime Prevention Program as follows:—

First: We are fighting ignorance.—By pamphlets, newspaper and magazine articles, books, lectures and radio speeches, we seek to tell parents and children something about the fundamental facts of life and the dangers that threaten them.

Second: We are waging a war against degeneracy.—The degenerate is a menace, that the policewoman must combat if she is to save children, girls and women from crime's clutches.

Third: We advocate institutional care for the insane and feeble-minded. This group is responsible for much crime and its members victimize many unsuspecting persons.

Fourth: We advocate proper detention quarters for non-offenders, so that this group may not be made criminals through association with criminals. Non-offenders may be runaways, missing persons or material witnesses who are held temporarily by the police pending the disposition of their cases.

Fifth: We are working for universal foot-printing of babies at birth and the finger-printing of mothers at that time, as a permanent means of personal identification and a prevention of the too general crimes of infanticide, abandonment and kidnapping.

Sixth: We lend our protection to the unmarried mother, in order that she and her child may be saved for society rather than swell the ranks of social outcasts, the easy victims of crime.

No nurse can read this creed without realizing at once that she has a logical place in the organization of those who are laboriously striving to make such a program a reality and force in the community, and as a policewoman I say that the sooner a large number of trained nurses take up the profession of policewomanship, the quicker will these things, designed for the betterment of human conditions, be more universally accomplished.

You, who have entered a lofty profession with the idea of serving humanity and making life more bearable for mankind, can appreciate the policewoman's idealism and understand her eagerness to serve according to the mandates of her office. For that reason the profession of policewomanship beckons to trained nurses and welcomes them as possible and logical policewomen.

"To cure is the voice of the past,

To prevent, the divine whisper of to-day."

Let trained nurses join police forces with this motto as a guide and inspiration.

The development of the policewoman as she is to-day is the result of about ten years' effort along lines entirely new in police work. Policewomen are employed by a great many government, such as for instance those of Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, Holland, Ireland, Norway, Switzerland, and the United States of America. In most instances the National Councils of Women in the different countries have promoted the movement strongly. If further information is desired about the subject, Mrs. Hamilton's book, "The Policewoman, Her Service and Ideals," published very recently by F. A. Stokes Company, New York, is strongly recommended. (C. R.)