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GRADUATION ADDRESS

Following is Dr. Tanton's address to the graduate nurses of the Prince County Hospital already reported. Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen.

We meet again this year to congratulate the graduation class on the completion of their course of instruction and training, to certify to our approval of their conduct and progress while they have been with us, and to testify by the diplomas and badges conferred upon them, to our belief in their worthiness to take part in the noble work of their profession; the work of helping to heal and to relieve, as far as in them lies, the pain and the distress of the sick, the maimed and the dying. That they will well and truly discharge these responsible and solemn functions we, who have been familiar with their work in the hospital and have assisted in their training and at their examinations have neither doubt nor misgiving. They are earnest and worthy recruits to an army of workers whose life work is to wage incessant war against disease and death in every form. What I have to say tonight, in endeavoring to assist the objects of this meeting will be chiefly from a professional or medical point of view, and although I cannot by any means claim to speak as the official mouthpiece of the profession, yet as a member of the profession and teaching staff of the hospital, fairly claim to speak with some knowledge of its views with reference to the proper treatment and the proper care and tending of the sick. Time was not so very long ago, when the attendance and advice of the doctor with the kindly but unskilled assistance of friends and neighbors were all or nearly all that sick persons had to rely upon for their comfort or cure, or if nurses so called were to be had, at best, they were self-taught and without scientific training of any kind. Even the doctors' ideas about the nature of disease were often misty and indefinite and the science of medicine had but little claim to be ranked among the exact sciences, until the advent of Bacteriology, thanks to the discoveries of modern science, all these things are greatly changed for the better. The causes of disease have become so much better known and its processes and effects so much better understood that most diseases are now much more manageable, and the resulting mortality has been greatly reduced. In short, medicine, including of course surgery, has established its claim to be ranked among the exact sciences. And how have these changes been brought about? By substituting the accurate scientific methods of observation and practice for the crude and indefinite methods of the past. But doctors themselves would have been powerless in carrying out these changes but for the able and valuable assistance of the modern trained nurse; and for the introduction of this system of medicine and the world at large must forever remain under a load of obligation to the great founder of the system—"Florence Nightingale." The trained nurse has become almost as necessary in the treatment of the sick as the doctor himself, and if serious or prolonged illness the two go, much unnecessary suffering and many preventable deaths must be the consequences. During the recent epidemic of influenza the Prince County Hospital nurses certainly were found here doing their duty over this island, still as matters now stand there is a considerable class of our people quite out of the reach of the trained nurse, and until this want is supplied they must continue to suffer and to die much as if no system of trained nursing existed in this country. I say this without blaming anyone. It is probably nobody's fault, but it is a provincial misfortune, and one which should not and indeed must not be beyond the reach of remedy. Witness the District nurses last fall. No doubt the hospitals of the province are training up nurses to the full measure of their capacity and the

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means of their disposal, the Prince County is anyway, but the process is a slow one, and as far as the nurses themselves are concerned is attended with considerable expenditure of time, anxiety and money before they find themselves in a position to earn a bare livelihood. Moreover their duties are arduous and exacting, and their necessary expenses constant and considerable, while their emoluments are fluctuating and uncertain, and to make ends meet their scale of fees must be such as to place their services beyond the reach of all but persons of ample means to whom the additional expenditure of a few dollars a day during a lengthened illness causes little or no inconvenience. But these people of ample means form only the minority of our population; while the greater majority of people with limited incomes, both in town and outlying districts, and the poor in their own homes whose needs in the matter of nursing help are quite as urgent, but whose means are inadequate to supply them under existing conditions. In the matter of the Prince County Hospital, under its capable and efficient superintendent, Miss Ross, has endeavored to supply, but for the hospital to supply the needs of such as these, it has to have ample funds to extend its floor space. When its needs are made known through the proper authorities, the public, whose duty and privilege it is to serve, will support generously as in the past, so that it may extend to every class in the community throughout the length and breadth of this Prince County, those valuable and health giving services which should and shall be the prerogative of the poor as well as the rich. And this is no impossibility. What has been done elsewhere can be done here. It is not for me now on this occasion to enter upon the details of this great scheme for skilled nursing for the poor. If intrusted to the Prince County Hospital order of nurses it will be in safe hands, but this much I must needs say, that the aim ought to be to make it acceptable to all who take part in it, to the nurses who would have to do most of the work, to the doctors and others who supervise it, and to the sick who would benefit most by it. It is difficult to imagine any more worthy object for gifts, great or small, than this order of nurses, whose every hour application would be relieving human pain and saving human life. And now we come to the Prince County Hospital itself. Our building is not of the expensive or ornamented kind. We have no marble steps nor costly internal fittings, but yet our patients have been well housed and cared for, well fed and with comfortable beds to lie upon, and it has been the aim of our lady superintendent to make up for five o'clock teas and lack of luxuries and expensive appliances by skillful treatment and kind attention, and we hope we have succeeded. We certainly seem to have won and to have retained the confidence of those upon whom the hospital is dependent for support. In this way we have tried to make the contributions of the public go as far as possible in doing good to the greatest number with the means at our disposal. And yet our superintendent informs me that it will be necessary in future to build a new wing and operating theatre if its usefulness is to be increased, as it is, our hospital is something to be proud of. And now, ladies and gentlemen, we are apt in thinking of the hospital's future, to forget that we have an efficient training school, which is part and parcel of the hospital. There is really no line of demarcation between them, and what benefits the one also does good to the other. Our nurses in training do the whole nursing work of the hospital. And they do well. And these are some of our nurses, they are healthy and they are happy. They are well educated, they have refined tastes and cultivated minds. They have come to use of their own free will, having chosen the nursing of the sick as their life's work because they have a natural aptitude for it. They have kind in-

stincts, and they yield ready and willing obedience to those in authority. They love their profession and they are earnestly anxious to excel in it. And there is their working dress—it is not costly; it is not made of silk or satin; indeed, it is made of materials quite inexpensive. We think it appropriate and we hope you will think it not unbecoming. Our poor sick patients like it. They say it cheers them, and why should they not be cheered? And all the more so when with the dresses are warm hearts and willing hands. They furnish also object lessons of cleanliness and tidiness, virtues often lacking in those to which they minister. I might go to show some of the collateral advantages to be derived from our training school; how it is useful to the hospital, to individual, to private families, to the state, etc., but time will not permit, and now it remains for me for a few moments to call attention to another side of the picture. Graduate nurses—in the past the Prince County has been your hospital, but in the future the world must be your hospital and your own good sense and your self-reliance—aided always by the advice of your allies and protectors, the doctors, must be your future trainers. Your relation to the community as yet you know comparatively little, for this part of your training, you can learn but little in the hospital, the habits, demeanor and surroundings of private patients will often be found to differ from the hospital patients, and will require to be met in a very different way. There will be social and other problems to be dealt with, which will require all your skill and tact for their happy solution, but you will win easily by kindness and forbearance which would be strenuously resisted if demanded as a right. There are other duties on which it is unnecessary to dwell, your duty to yourselves, to each other, to this Prince County Hospital and to the honorable profession to which you now belong. The reputation and the good name of all these will be safe in your keeping, and we may rest assured that you will never bring disgrace upon your noble profession by descending to conduct unbecoming P.C. Graduates and gentlemen. But the obligations must not be all one-sided, and the public to whom you are to minister, have also obligations and responsibilities which cannot be ignored. To us of the hospital you are in a sense our children and as loving parents we will follow you with warm interest in your future careers, rejoicing in your successes. You may rely on us in difficulty or distress. And you, ladies and gentlemen, who represent the general public, will be justly expected to do your part. It is for you that they have undertaken the arduous work of their profession; and are faithful workers worthy of their reward. See to it that it is not withheld nor given grudgingly. Cheer them with your sympathy, encourage them with your confidence and contribute to their success in life by substantial acknowledgments for anxious work faithfully done. Be of good cheer and may God speed you and prosper you on your noble mission.



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