



Dr. Saniyya Habboub: Fifty Years of Devoted Medical Service

The Muslim Cultural Club in Beirut celebrated on May 19, 1982, the fiftieth anniversary of Dr. Saniyya Habboub's activity in the medical field.

She was the first Lebanese woman to travel abroad for the sake of studying medicine. After receiving her primary and secondary education at the British School and American School for Girls respectively, she moved to the American Junior College for Girls (presently BUC) and was one of its first three graduates in 1925. Having decided to study medicine, she moved to the American University of Beirut, but the necessity of wearing a veil and of contacting boys in a narrow-minded environment made her decide to continue her studies in the United States. She received her medical degree at Western College, Cincinnati, from where she moved to Philadelphia University where she specialized in Gynecology, and became the object of friendly attention from both administrators and professors. On her graduation day, as a form of tribute paid to her by the University, Dr. Philip Hitti, the Lebanese historian and professor at Princeton University, was invited to give the commencement address. Dr. Hitti mentioned in his address that he felt honored to have such a prominent compatriot. Before leaving the University, Dr. Habboub showed her gratitude by endowing it with a scholarship in her name, representing the sum she had collected after delivering a series of lectures in the States on various topics. Her name is engraved on a marble pillar, next to the names of other donors who have supported the University's task.

In 1932, Dr. Habboub returned to Beirut and opened a clinic at Bab-Edris. Since that time, she has devoted herself to the service and help of patients who flocked to her from every part of Lebanon. Many were those women whose financial condition moved her to treat them freely, reducing their charges to the price of medicines only.

Though she was committed to her profession, she found time to do volunteer work in the Red-Cross Association and to serve as a member on the boards of the Muslim Orphanage, the Maqassed Hospital and other organizations.

While we recognize the role played by educators in guiding Dr. Habboub, we should not overlook the influence of her home environment and the encouragement she received from her father, an enlightened figure who had made of his house a meeting place for eminent scholars from Beirut and other parts of Lebanon.

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