

representation of the facts of the case. But in medicine and surgery we have none of these delusive triumphs; for the ultimate condition of the patient is a touchstone which never deceives. To us, therefore, more than to any other large class of the community, it is given to have not only abundant experience of truth, but an equally abundant experience of its value; and I think it is our duty to sustain its banner high above the dust and turmoil of the controversies of the day. For all who are engaged in the treatment of the sick, whether as doctors or nurses, I hold that a scrupulous truthfulness is the most essential of all qualities; and I look upon disregard or perversion of truth, on their parts, much as I should look upon cowardice in a soldier, or upon want of chastity in a woman. The necessary truthfulness cannot be practised without that habitual circumspection in the use of language to which I have referred, without the habitual employment of words which distinguish between what we know and what we have only more or less reason to think probable; nor can it be practised unless we also cultivate what I may call a tender conscience with regard to the operations of the intellect, and the conditions of assent. For my own part, I think it is morally wrong to allow the mind to fall into confusion between proof and probability, or to accept the latter, otherwise than provisionally, as a substitute for the former. It is not my purpose, however, to enter into moral considerations; nor will I do so farther than to say that we live in a time in which an increasing disregard for truth, or even an increasing prevalence of mendacity, as displayed by many who belong to what are called the educated classes, appears to me to be little short of a national calamity and disgrace. This increasing disregard, and increasing prevalence, are largely due, I think, to the enormous recent increase in the amount of printed matter which is daily issued for our perusal; insomuch that we are overwhelmed by assertions which are unsupported by evidence, and we are tempted, by sheer weariness of the task of scrutiny, to hope that those by whom these assertions are made have ascertained that they are true. In this hope we are sometimes induced to give them a temporary credence, or to repeat them as if they rested upon our own knowledge. Even in the case of journals which are professedly scientific, we have often to regret a too easy credulity; and there are many others, issued for the delectation of the general reader, and chiefly filled with personal gossip, to the conductors of which a false statement would often appear to be preferable to a true one, because, in the case of the former, the materials for a second paragraph will be furnished by the con-

tradition of the first. At any rate, from whatever cause, it cannot be denied that the national standard of veracity has been appreciably lowered during recent years; and I am strongly of opinion that doctors, and perhaps still more nurses, may do much to restore it to its right position by a constant effort to speak the truth on all scientific or professional topics. May we not hope that, among other good consequences of such an effort, those who do not deal in scientific topics, and whose so-called minds are preserved from starvation only by a thin diet of random assertion and unfounded surmise, may nevertheless in time learn to exercise caution in distributing this diet among their friends, more especially when the materials of which it is composed are calculated to injure the reputations of other people. It is part of the case of this Association that there are fifteen thousand nurses in the United Kingdom, all of whom are in frequent and intimate relations with the sick, and often also with their families. If these nurses will habitually so use language as to emphasize the distinction between knowledge and probability, and to remind their hearers of the advantages which will follow from keeping this distinction ever before the thoughts, I cannot believe it possible that so good and wise an example will be in any danger of being wholly thrown away. Its fruits will not be realised speedily; but it is necessary to use care and diligence in seed-time if we would hereafter obtain a harvest.

NURSING ECHOES.

*** Communications (duly authenticated with name and address, not for publication, but as evidence of good faith) are especially invited for these columns.*

THE British Nurses' Association scored another great success last Friday. The second Meeting of the Association was held, as it appears all other meetings will for this session take place, at the Medical Society's Rooms, in Chandos Street, Cavendish Square. The room was well filled, and everyone evidently thoroughly enjoyed the paper and the subsequent discussion. Mr. Editor tells me he has been so fortunate as to obtain the Lecture, and will publish it this week *in extenso*, doubtless to the great pleasure, and certainly the great benefit, of our readers all over the world; so it is unnecessary to say more, except to congratulate the Association, not only upon possessing Mr. Brudenell Carter's assistance, but upon its good fortune in eliciting from him such a masterpiece of eloquent, forcible reasoning, and of most graceful literary style. In the discussion which followed, Miss Wood, Miss Mollett, Miss Homersham, Sister

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