

## Associated Alumnae of Trained Nurses of the United States.

### THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS. (MRS. ISABEL HAMPTON ROBB.)

#### SOME OF THE LESSONS OF THE LATE WAR AND THEIR BEARING UPON TRAINED NURSING.

THE pleasure and gratitude with which I accepted, last year, the honour you conferred upon me in again electing me your President had several sources. Your action testified to your confidence in my efforts in behalf of the Association during the first year of its existence; it showed your willingness to allow the older blood of the pioneers to mingle actively with that of the fresher and later element and, moreover, emphasized the fact that "once a trained nurse always a trained nurse" and that, though married, a trained nurse need not necessarily be laid on the shelf but may continue to feel that she still has important duties and obligations towards the profession of which she remains an active life member. Finally, I accepted with thankfulness the privilege of assisting in directing a little further the steps at organization which your delegates of last year outlined. The one lion in my path to be dreaded was the obligation laid upon me of making another address, it seemed to me all I could possibly have to say had been said at our first annual meeting. Time, however, has shown me that I need not have faced my lion so hurriedly for the year has given me ready to hand a theme of such deep interest that in it I shall hope to find my inspiration to enable me to place it in some of its bearings clearly before you.

Two events have occurred during the past year, both of unusual interest to nurses, the first connected in large part with the past, the other of vital significance for the future of our profession. On March 6th, 1898, a large gathering of trained nurses, physicians and laymen was held in New York to celebrate the close of the first quarter of a century of trained nursing in the United States of America. The year was also marked by the demand for the first time for the services of trained nurses to meet the emergencies of war. I ask you to allow me, at the risk of repeating some things which have been said last year, for a few moments to look back over the past twenty-five years, because I believe that by so doing I shall be able to put before you more clearly certain phases of the second and more important subject of my address, namely, What lessons has the late war taught us and what bearing or influence may it have upon trained nursing in the future?

It is usually the custom with all well regulated business concerns to take account at stated times

of their affairs, to go over their past records and find out just how much has been accomplished and how much, if anything, stands to their credit for the future. As we have just rounded off our first quarter of a century it is then in order for us to re-read our records, and see how we have fared during that time and in how far the outlook for the future is hopeful. The trained nurse is a distinctly modern product. Twenty-five years ago we find her just starting out on her career, without antecedents, without experience, with all before her, and all to learn. Her credentials had to be of her own making, her professional standing had to be evolved; she had to establish her own traditions and in all these undertakings she had to maintain her own personal and professional dignity. She has, however, never lacked for friends, for here in New York the seed was sown by women for women and for the good of suffering humanity. And these founders of a new guild for women have stood through these first years ever loyal and true to watch over the best interests of the young plant, propping where necessary, pruning judiciously, and ever giving wise and friendly counsel. So long as the success or failure of the trained nurse was an open question her development was naturally slow, but after the first few years, when graduates began to increase in numbers and the value of their work had been manifest in the hospital and home we find more branches beginning to shoot out, and more training schools springing into existence. In the past ten years more especially there has been a not altogether healthy overgrowth; the increase has been almost alarming and there are now to be found all sorts and conditions of hospitals and training schools, with the result that the country has been flooded with a very nondescript class of women all bearing the title of trained nurse, the term standing for all grades of training and all grades of women. As a natural consequence the public has freely offered its criticisms, various and varied in character, upon the trained nurse, the good and bad having to bear their share equally of praise or blame. Here then was the first problem to confront us—the rapid increase in quantity without a corresponding improvement in quality—and as this discrepancy became more and more apparent, the older and better known schools with the instinct of self-preservation began to draw more closely within themselves, trusting in their own irreproachable names to protect their graduates, with the result that the members of one school were led to hold themselves severely aloof from those of another. Fortunately, this narrow and selfish policy could not last long. Gradually, but forcibly, it was borne in upon the minds of the older and more experienced that in this way

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