

### Annotations.

#### THE FAIR FLOWER OF COURAGE.

"I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man."

So spoke Thomas Jefferson, the noble author of the American Declaration of Independence, and these words were the text of Mrs. Bedford Fenwick's speech to the Society of American Women in London at their luncheon at Prince's on Monday last, for they were written not for one time and one age, but embody the truth which must be learnt in all times and all ages, by nations, societies, and individuals, who desire a solid foundation, whereon to raise a superstructure in which are incorporated the principles of justice, truth, and liberty, without which no person or Society can attain to true greatness of thought or action. These principles, thoroughly assimilated, become to us the very breath of life, the motives which guide our actions, the sturdy roots from which spring the fair flowers of nobility of conduct, resistance of wrong, courage and self respect. An evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit, a hot house plant cannot brave the winter's blast, and unless the motives which inspire our actions are firmly rooted in principle, unless the atmosphere in which we have developed is one of integrity and purity, it is probable that when temptation assails us, we shall bend before it as a reed before the wind, instead of making conscientious resistance to wrong.

Those who have closely watched nursing politics have seen this unhappy result effected in relation to nursing organisation. Who that attended the great meeting in St. George's Hall in 1887, to inaugurate the Profession of Nursing, can doubt that the great mass of nurses who were present on that occasion were animated by justifiable aspirations? Where are those aspirations to-day? Surely terribly down-trodden, crushed, and suborned to ignoble ends. What could have saved us as a profession from this discredit? "Eternal hostility against every form of tyranny" whether such tyranny be demonstrated in the form of patronage, of open enmity without, or of unlawful autocracy within.

It is because we feel so strongly on this point that we have unhesitatingly opposed the policy of those who have by every means endeavoured to prevent nurses from exercising their right of self government, who, through various forms of patronage, have aimed at keeping them in a condition of servitude rather than fostering their

desire for liberty of thought and action. Even now we are beginning to see the difference between organisations of nurses founded on professional lines and those which are not so founded.

A great International Congress of Nurses is to be held in the United States in September, which are the Nurses' Societies in this country that realise the importance of this event, which have already arranged to be represented by delegation and to pay the expenses of their respective Delegates? The Matrons' Council, which has persistently maintained its right to self government, the Registered Nurses' Society also organised on this professional basis, and the new and important League of St. Bartholomew's Hospital Certificated Nurses. On the other hand Miss Honnor Morten publicly bewails that recently, at the annual meeting of the Nurses' Co-operation, when she moved that this Society should send a representative to the coming Congress "there was not an atom of public or professional spirit among the women present" and that "the whole thing has been negatived without ever being referred to the nurses."

The Nurses' Co-operation has been commercially successful, we have only recently drawn attention to this fact. But when has a "public and professional spirit" been inculcated or fostered in the members? Never, so far as we are aware.

When have they been encouraged to realise the necessity for *esprit-de-corps*? Such a quality is not of quick growth amongst women, and needs careful tending. The members of the Nurses' Co-operation never have been officially encouraged to unite to help others as well as themselves. This noble aim should be the basis of every professional organisation. Like the members of the R.B.N.A. they have too long been "spoon fed" to grasp and digest at a moment's notice healthy, life-sustaining nourishment. Women encouraged to read the banal trash placed at their disposal by a partisan semi-professional press, and discouraged from striving after high professional ideals, cannot be expected to appreciate the importance, and enormous educative influence, of a gathering together for consultative purposes of leaders of nursing thought. But as the members of the Nurses' Co-operation have not yet been consulted separately, as to whether they wish to send a Delegate to the Congress at Buffalo or not, surely there is plenty of time for this to be done. Why should not Miss Honnor Morten take the initiative?

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