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EDITORIAL.

SELF-DETERMINATION.

The most important thing in the world for any group of professional persons is that they shall possess the power, and the will, to manage their own affairs. And, strange though it may seem, the two are by no means synonymous. For the reason that to exercise the power of self-determination—self-government—involves trouble, involves probably collision with vested interests, and, consequently demands courage, self-denial, and fortitude.

On the other hand, to weakly yield to opportunists' demands which originate in self-interest, or in economic pressure on the part of employers, because this is the line of least resistance, is a despicable thing. Nevertheless, human nature seems specially susceptible to such influences, and so in politics, and in that section with which we are specially concerned—Nursing Politics—there arise two opposing forces: the one composed of those animated by the pure spirit of professional patriotism, who are prepared to make any sacrifice to further the general good, to hold in trust that which it has already gained, and, in their generation, to advance it yet further; the other keen upon self-advantage, willing to relinquish at any moment their right and, more important still, the rights of the whole profession, if they can gain some personal advantage, personal triumph. Is it any wonder that these two elements from time to time meet in direct conflict? "All progress is strife to the end," and on the one side we have those who hold that "Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom," and are willing to sacrifice even life itself to preserve

it; on the other, those who with a smile will, as of old, put down thirty pieces of silver, and with subtle and specious argument betray their best friends and sell their profession into bondage; for so small a price are they willing to sell their souls, for some temporary advantage or honour.

If we turn from the human race to the vegetable world, we see the same law holds good. The oak, sturdy, self-dependent, most beautiful of forest trees, in storm as well as in sunshine stands erect, and affords shelter and shade. Grafted on to it, drawing sustenance from it yet giving nothing to it, we find the mistletoe, a true parasite, attractive but ephemeral and unimportant.

Again the parallel holds good. For the oak endures for centuries, the emblem of honourable self-dependence; the mistletoe, ephemeral and useless, serves but to decorate our houses at Christmas, to cause some passing merriment, and is then consigned to the dust-heap.

In the Cathedral at Ghent is a fine pulpit by Delvaux—most of the pulpits of Belgium are exceptionally fine—in oak and marble, representing the Tree of Life. At the foot of the tree is an allegorical representation of Time and Truth in figures nearly life-size. Truth is showing Time the writing on the pages of an open book, and Time is shrinking back from the sight. Over the head of Truth a little Cupid holds a crown.

Let us strive to do our duty fearlessly and honestly. Then when we see the writing in the book we shall not shrink back, and Time will justify those who in their generation contend for the Truth, and endure misrepresentation and persecution rather than be faithless to the principles which they know to be founded upon it.

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