

THE EPILOGUE TO THE NURSING PAGEANT.

The President, Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, standing at the centre table, said: Having struggled for a quarter of a century for the statutory organisation of Nursing Education and Registration, in the year 1911 I designed a Nursing Pageant, the beautiful words for which were written by the late Miss Mollett in heroic English, which was presented in London to arouse public interest in our cause.

This Pageant presented to the Goddess Hygeia, surrounded by her attendants—Earth, Air, Fire and Water—petitions for Nursing reform to which she was graciously pleased to hearken. These petitions were voiced by the Spirit of Nursing, Science and Legal Status, to whom in the Epilogue the great Goddess of Health made a sympathetic and encouraging reply.

After the passing of the Nurses' Registration Acts in 1919 Miss Mollett wrote a second Epilogue, which until to-night has never been made public. I propose to read it to you.

You will imagine the Goddess Hygeia seated surrounded by her attendants towards whom Science advances leading a procession of Registered Nurses:—

HYGEIA (to Science): And who are these who advance so boldly?

SCIENCE: They bear the banner of Victory. They come as conquerors from a hard fought fight. Hear them, Mother.

HYGEIA: I listen.

LEGAL STATUS: Others have approached thee with prayers for aid, with cries for justice. I come, oh goddess, with gifts in my hands. I come in triumph. The fight of thirty years is over and we have won. Justice has been granted us. Bare justice, no more. Here stand, oh Hygeia, the three in whose hands is placed a great power, and a great trust. Under thy banner that is borne before us, the Spirit of Nursing, Science and Legal Status, we shall redress the wrongs of those who have cried to thee, will straighten the crooked path, will strengthen and sharpen the weapons with which thy servants fight. Under them thy servants will help to cleanse the foul places of the earth that they breed pestilence no more. Forever until Time shall cease, and the world shall end, shall the cry of the sick and wounded arise, but under the just and wise rule of these three, thy servants shall answer that cry with greater skill, and a higher knowledge of thy laws.

Now hearken, all ye here present.

By law and statute it has been decreed that henceforth the Nurses of this Realm shall be banded together, under these three, bound by the laws of honour, of duty, and of compassion. And none shall aspire to the legal status of a sick nurse but those to whom the three have granted the right. And that right shall be given to none who have not learned the art of the sick nurse well and truly, without fear or favour—lest she harm those she would aid. None who offer teaching may deny or withhold it; and in those hostels for the sick where they prepare the sisters for their work they shall be well and truly instructed therein, and true and just rules shall be enforced. And those who shall

administer the laws of these three shall be the wisest masters of the healing art, and the wisest of the women who nurse, and the best of those who know and understand the needs of the people of this Empire, and they shall have power over the nurses of these Realms. And the nurses who know, and have been trained in knowledge, shall themselves appoint the wise women amongst the nurses who shall be of those who administer the rule of the three—according to the laws of the communities of this Realm, that have been since of old times.

And a Scroll shall be kept and thereon shall be entered the names of those who are fit and worthy to be thy servants, to teach thy laws, and to minister to the sick. Thus runs the decree.

Speak to thy people, oh goddess, for the struggle has been long and hard—and thy servants have fought thy battles through good and evil days, and oftentimes with poor and blunted swords, but ever with courage, with the courage that suffers and dies for others. Many, ah many, of thy noblest followers have fallen by the way, and have not lived to see the triumph of right, and of the justice for which they strove.

Welcome, I pray thee, those who stand here as the heralds of a new era, the heralds of a higher and nobler life.

HYGEIA: Proudly and gladly do I rise to thank and welcome those who follow my banner in triumph and victory. Oh, my children, well do ye deserve that for which ye have prayed. For ye did not pray for gold, or for jewels, or for selfish advancement, but that ye might have fuller knowledge, and for help that ye might grow in wisdom, and strength to teach others to keep my laws. And ye prayed that ignorance and selfishness might no longer bar your path.

Behold the bar has been raised, and ye have gathered the first fruits of a glorious harvest. See to it, my children, that ye use your victory worthily, and barter not your noble rights for low and selfish aims.

With fuller light and greater knowledge must ever remain the pure fire of self-sacrifice. Firmly shall ye stand by the laws of honour. Ye are servants of the community, and I look to you to aid the world to right great wrongs.

Let all my children know my laws; let them be written clear, that all who run may read. For, without that knowledge, no tenderness, no sympathy, no love, no gentleness will save the sick and suffering. If science guide not pity she may well harm those she seeks to save. But I will join them.

(Lays the hand of the Spirit of Nursing in that of Science.)

Together ye shall go forth to fight the noblest fight man ever waged, and give again to the dwellers of this fair earth the pure, clean life that is their birthright. The birthright that their fathers have squandered ye shall return to them, and man—and woman—shall stand in the light of that perfect day—not gods—the gods forbid—but perfect man and perfect woman—to give again to the earth a noble race to rule a noble world.

(The Procession retires, led by the Spirit of Nursing and Science hand in hand, followed by Legal Status.)

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)