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Editorial.

THE LESSONS OF THE CONGRESS.—II.

We pointed out, last week, that the recent International Congress of Nurses had proved what remarkable results can be achieved by professional co-operation. This, indeed, is, to our mind, not only the most important lesson taught by the recent Meetings, but also the most happy augury of benefits which such co-operation may secure for the Nursing profession in the future. We look back to the time, over twenty-two years ago, when there was not a professional organisation of any kind amongst nurses, in any part of the world; and when, as a natural consequence, the work of nurses was more exhausting to mind and body, and worse remunerated, than that of any other women, because they had no power of voicing their wishes for better conditions of education or labour, or any means of protesting against the many and grave injustices from which they suffered, both individually and collectively. We can recall the strenuous antagonism which was displayed to the first efforts which we made to unite nurses together for the improvement of their calling, and for their mutual assistance and benefit. We have, in these pages, placed on record the many efforts which have ever since been made to intimidate nurses and thus prevent them from associating themselves together.

It is, therefore, a matter of profound satisfaction to us to know that one and all of those efforts to prevent progress have failed, and that the advance of professional organisation has for every one of the last twenty-two years steadily increased and extended more and more widely. From this country, the movement spread, as might have been expected, first amongst our sisters in the American States, and then from one to another of the British Colonies. Then, in

one European country after another, the dawn of Nursing freedom came, and nurses became united together for professional objects. It has always been to us a matter for congratulation that whereas similar organisations in the past amongst men have been almost entirely founded for the purpose of acquiring better personal conditions, the movement in the Nursing world has been more unselfish, because it has been founded upon the desire, first, to obtain improved professional education, better professional discipline, and, therefore, greater advantages, from the work of nurses, to the sick and suffering.

In this altruistic conduct, nurses have followed the splendid example always set by the medical profession which has ever maintained that their duty to the public came far before the care of their individual workers. At the same time, the union of nurses inevitably brought about better and more just conditions of work and remuneration. For example, an organised opposition was at once made to the methods of farming out nurses to the public, for the personal benefit of a few individuals and hospitals, which was the system solely in force a quarter of a century ago. This opposition has steadily extended, and produced more equitable economic arrangements amongst Private Nursing institutions.

Finally, it needs no demonstration to prove that the recent Congress was only made possible, and only achieved its splendid success, because Nurses in every part of the world were united together; and so through their local Societies were encouraged, or assisted, to take part in the great gathering which typified the active Union of the Nurses of all lands. The success of the Congress, therefore, is of the happiest augury for the continued and ever increasing strength and influence of Co-operation amongst Nurses in the future.

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