

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,255

SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 1912.

Vol. XLVIII

EDITORIAL.

FEARLESS AND TENDER.

One of the finest products of the age is the trained nurse, whom no picture can idealize, when found at her best, because she is greater in real life than any pen and ink portrait. For the true nurse is a warm-hearted, sentient being, throbbing with vitality, inspired by noble influences, dominated by a hatred of all that is evil, mean and base, and, by a passionate sympathy with righteousness in every form, confined to no locality or country, but world-wide in its interest. Indeed, without the foundation of sympathy, a nurse may be a good machine, and even be to a certain extent a professional success, but she can never attain greatness, or develop the qualities most essential to the sick.

To the sick person the personality of those who surround him is all-important. For the effect of mind upon matter, though little understood, is most powerful; but it is certain that, as the Great Healer Himself perceived that someone had touched Him because "virtue had gone out of Him," so the sympathetic nurse gives much more than mere skilful attendance to the sick in her charge, and some of her own vitality, imperceptibly given, is a factor in their recovery.

Therefore the quality of sympathy is more, and not less necessary, for the trained nurse than for the ordinary person. She should, indeed, have an inexhaustible fount, which embraces the sick, the suffering, the helpless, the poor, the mentally defective; which is inspired by a fine indignation against all forms of oppression, and which is passionately alive to the cruelty of needless suffering occasioned by preventable disease, and by insanitary conditions—to all those factors which cause physical and moral evil.

No one feels these things more acutely than the sympathetic nurse, for the curse

of caste does not exist only in the Far East, but under other names—such as the distinction of class—is a potent factor in this country, so that horrors of daily occurrence in our midst do not reach the ears of the more fortunate classes, and, when they do, are often passed over in silence as unsuitable to mention. Nurses are vividly aware of them, owing to the tragedies which they meet with in the course of their work, and, it may be, when they arrive at the full realization of their responsibilities, which are much greater than the somewhat narrow environment within the hospital gates, the world will be a sweeter and better place for their cleansing influence. But to attain this, true sympathy, unselfishness, and a fine disregard of expediency are necessary. While many nurses are technically proficient, only the limited few have yet attained to the higher level, where fearless and tender—and the two qualities usually go together—are found the workers who leave their mark on the world's history.

Those whose memories are cherished long after they have passed away, are not the powerful, the ambitious, the rich, but those who in their day and generation "loved much," and were inspired by a passionate desire for the betterment of their race, collectively and individually. Of our own pioneers, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Friedrike Fliedner, Elizabeth Fry, Florence Nightingale, Agnes Jones, Dora Pattison, Isla Stewart, Isabel Hampton Robb, and a host of others stand out pre-eminent as noble examples.

When "former things have passed away," there will still abide faith, hope, and love, of which the greatest is love. Let us cherish it, let us pay homage to it where we find it, for in its unselfish manifestation, not in its counterfeit presentment, it is probably the rarest, as it is the most precious of the virtues.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)