

THE WATCHWORD.

SPOKEN BY MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK.

ASPIRATION.

Madam President, Members of the International Council of Nurses, and Fraternal Delegates,—It is our custom when in Grand Council assembled to select a Watchword which shall serve as a common bond of union till we meet again. Work—Courage—Life—all these have sounded the note of our endeavours for a period of years, and the word I propose we shall take as our motto for the next triennial term is Aspiration.

This word expresses a desire to seek eagerly after that which is above us. That was the inspiration of the Council Idea, and that is its goal. The essential essence of Nursing is not merely to afford skilled help to suffering and diseased humanity—it is something far higher than that. It is the endeavour to appropriate the spiritual force which is the common heritage of our profession, bequeathed to it by many noble men and women, our predecessors, who have served the sick of all ages in every land; a reserve force upon which, as long as we walk worthily, we may freely draw, a force potent with grace, so that in helping to heal the body, those to whom we minister may discern the fineness of motive which inspires our vocation, and the uplifting spiritual zeal which inspires our service, and may be sustained and comforted thereby.

From its inception our Council has aspired far beyond what was considered practicable.

To infuse with a sense of professional solidarity the nurses of all nations, so that as a community they should zealously conserve the health and happiness of the people—the essential right of Life—that with sound knowledge and skill they should serve and restore to health the sick in mind and body—and in so doing maintain the honour of their profession—are lofty aims. Believing, as we do, that these high aims can be advanced by greater unity of thought, sympathy and purpose, we have banded ourselves together in this International Council to further them; and we come together from all parts of the world to confer on questions not merely of imperial, but of human weight and consequence. Our highest aspiration is—to keep pure and sacred the physical fount of Life, and thus give liberty and solace to the Soul.

High aspirations indeed, but not beyond attainment, and high aspirations are the best incentive to high endeavours.

It is not enough, however, that we attend these great gatherings and enjoy communion. It should be the aspiration of each one of us to help to build up by personal service our National Organizations, from which internationalism derives its vitality and strength. That is one aspiration which I invite you to translate into accomplishment during the next triennial period. Do not let us allow the inspiration of our conference to evaporate in sentiment. We need to capture, concentrate, and utilize it as a compelling force in the upraising and resultant happiness of all things sentient.

Then to aspire to have all things in common—especially to be generous in sharing knowledge. That which one has acquired—after stress and toil—let her hasten to pass on, so that the more may benefit from the result of her labour, and we could have no more effective medium through which to teach than this world-wide confederation of nurses.

Also, whilst cherishing the entrancing vision of the ideal, a vision which guards monotony of work from becoming monotony of life, we should aspire to be eminently practical. Thus let us take counsel together of practical ways and means—of the happy Home life and humane Hospital life of the pupil—of a sound and thorough basis for our Educational Curriculum. Let us see that, when the worker is worthy of her hire, the hire shall be worthy of the work accomplished. Only thus can we fit ourselves for our high vocation, and make that vocation respond to the needs of the community. Let us aspire to the purest and most strenuous endeavour.

It has been written that “he is a profane person that performs holy duties lightly and superficially; all our duties ought to be warmed with zeal, winged with affection, and shot up to Heaven from the whole bent of the soul. Our whole hearts must go with them; and the strength and vigour of our spirits must diffuse themselves in every part of them. . . . Truly all our sacrifices must be offered up to God with fire; and that fire which alone can sanctify them, must be darted down from Heaven; the celestial flame of zeal and love, which comes down from Heaven, and hath a natural tendency to ascend thither again, and to carry up our hearts and souls upon its wings.”

Let Aspiration be our Watchword until our next meeting, assured that, if touched with the celestial flame, our hearts and souls may aspire to make altogether lovely the beneficent work to which the members of this great Federation of Nurses have the happiness to give their lives.

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