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EDITORIAL.

THE HEROISM OF NURSES.

Mr Membrey, M.L.A., Melbourne, Victoria, speaking on a public occasion in support of an effort to raise funds for the Red Cross, and the Edith Cavell Trust Fund, established for the benefit of sick and incapacitated Military Nurses, referred warmly to the heroism of the Military Nurses, saying that there was none superior to it. There had been heroines in past wars, but no name would ever be regarded with such feelings of sympathy as that of Edith Cavell.

Colonel Springthorpe said that the men at the front had been electrified by the magnificent work done by the women of Australia. The nurses sent were especially fitted for the duties they had to perform, and they performed them in a most efficient manner. The great thing at the present time was to do the best thing possible to assist in this great war. There were a great many people who could do better work at home than at the front, and vice versa. The work of the nurses had been magnificent, and the pluck of the Australians in the firing line was superb. Never had he heard a grumble or a single complaint. He was proud of Australia before he went away, but now he was unutterably proud of it. The women's sacrifice had been as great as the men's, and in many cases the danger had been very little less. The work they had done deserved the everlasting thanks of the community. A number of these women would come back incapacitated, and the fund they were raising that day would fulfil the worthy object of affording relief.

It is right that the work of the nurses should be appreciated, but we doubt if it can ever be estimated at its true value by the most sympathetic of friends. It must be known from the inside to be accurately

gauged. Heroines are not made when a sudden call comes under the stress of a terrifying explosion or bombardment. The finely tempered steel, which responds in a moment to the hand upon it, has been fashioned only after passing through many processes. In the same way the fashioning of nurses into the highly skilled and competent women, who instinctively act in a disciplined way when threatened by danger and sudden death is the work of years of arduous training of raw material responsive to teaching. That is the secret of their heroism. They have duly subjected themselves voluntarily to hardships, they have always placed the interests of their patients before their own, if they are worthy of the name of nurse, and they instinctively apply the principles they have practised through monotonous days and nights when a moment comes for making the supreme sacrifice. And no members of their profession are surprised. They would be surprised indeed did they not do so.

This confidence of the nursing profession in their comrades under all circumstances, has a place, we believe, in stimulating them to respond to the demands made upon them and in helping them, all honour to them, to win through.

It is a generous thought to raise, as a memorial to Edith Cavell, a fund for the benefit of nurses who return to Australia incapacitated: Only, we hope that it will supplement, and not be a substitute for, the pensions, or allowances, which should be assured to all those nurses who are incapacitated in the course of their work for our wounded. They no less than the fighting men should have this provision as a right. But pensions we know must perforce be provided on a just, rather than on a lavish scale, so that there is still scope for the fund which is being so generously supported, both as a memorial to the dead, and a provision for the living.

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