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EDITORIAL.

PROFESSIONAL TRADITIONS.

A distinguished member of the medical profession, as we report in another column, recently addressing a meeting of Nurses in Glasgow, stated that "he did not think nurses sometimes appreciated what a young profession they were. They had not yet had time, for instance, as the ancient medical profession, or the legal profession, to establish precedents and to collect around them great traditions. He could look back to the birth of the nursing profession."

With all deference, we beg to differ. It is true that before our great law giver, Florence Nightingale, laid down definite principles and defined the scientific basis which underlies the practice of nursing, its traditions were handed down mainly by word of mouth, but the "ancient profession of medicine" itself cannot claim to have been one of the exact sciences for a great number of years. Its traditions may have come down from Hippocrates, those of the nursing profession reach back at least as far, and the splendid devotion to duty, discipline, and disregard of personal danger, shown by trained nurses to-day in bombarded hospitals, on torpedoed ships, in the horrors of burning buildings, are inspired by them. The courage shown by nurses is of no mushroom growth. Instinctively in the moment of crisis they are supported by the traditions which have dominated those who have nursed the sick throughout the ages and who have placed the interests of their charges first.

These precedents and traditions are more-over capable of expansion and application to the needs of our own times, for just as the nurse in past ages devoted herself to the patient, the professional devotion of many a modern nurse is concentrated on the welfare and regeneration of the race. It is this which inspires the school nurse in her daily fight

with verminous conditions in school children, and we have it on high authority that had it not been for the services of school nurses the schools, owing to the close proximity of the higger mugger life of the trench and camp to the homes of the people, would have been overwhelmed by the invasion of itch and lice, whereas they have become steadily cleaner even in war time. The social service thus rendered can hardly be overestimated.

Our oftentimes unconscious heritage comes down to us from such devoted women as the Roman Matrons Marcella, Fabiola, and Paula, of whom it is recorded "she was marvellous debonair and piteous to them that were sick—she laid the pillows aright and in point; she rubbed their feet and boiled water to wash them, she was to them piteous, and not to herself"; and from the Augustinian Sisters—a Nursing Order who have a record of 12 centuries of unbroken service at the Hôtel Dieu in Paris, and who helped to establish that precedent of devotion to duty at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, which has inspired so many a modern nurse trained within its walls. The indifference to danger, and the military discipline and precision which characterise the organization of our nursing schools and the demeanour of their graduates have come down to us not merely as an incident of our service in the Crimean War, as some suppose, but from the Military Nursing Orders of the Middle Ages.

Did space permit we could outline many more of our precedents and great traditions. We will mention only one. The loyal allegiance of the well trained nurse to the members of the medical profession is established by precedent, and is a traditional duty, as well as a personal obligation. This also is a tradition of considerable importance: for without such loyal service much of the work of the modern physician and surgeon would be impossible of performance.

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