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EDITORIAL.

THE APPRENTICESHIP TO DUTY.

There are in every profession members who see visions and dream dreams, and they are often regarded by their colleagues as impossible altruists. Yet, in very truth they are the salt of their profession, usually severely practical in the rôle they lay down for themselves, and in the methods by which they eventually attain ends which have been declared, by colleagues who pride themselves on their common sense, as excellent in theory, but impossible in practice.

In an illuminating chapter in "A Short History of Nursing" on the "Accomplishments of the Past, and the Tasks and Ideals of the Future," Miss L. L. Dock, and Miss Isabel M. Stewart, show how the original nursing impulse has been reinforced from time to time, first by the religious motive, and then by such ideals as those of chivalry and patriotism, of humanitarianism and social reform. They write:—

"The question now is, whether we are going to continue this line of advance, or whether we are going to slip back into one of those periods which our history has shown us often came when the momentum of a great movement had slackened somewhat, and the pioneers had begun to give place to a new generation. That critical time we are now approaching."

They close with an extract from a talk given by Miss Nutting, "one of our great modern leaders, to a group of college women just entering their nursing training, on 'The Apprenticeship to Duty.'"

Miss Nutting says: "It has been the fashion to cavil somewhat at hospital discipline, to assume that it had hardships and indignities

that no freeborn young woman bent on preserving her own individuality would endure. Just at the present moment we are not, perhaps, so greatly concerned, as we have been, with ourselves. Perhaps we are seeing that the higher individualism may consist in throwing our own effort into the stream of some greater effort, and that true freedom comes not but by order and discipline, and perhaps we may come eventually to realise that the hospitals in which we work are in a real sense battlefields where men and women and children are fighting for their lives. In their struggle and dire need of help they have come to us, trusting us to throw our strength and skill in upon their side, to fight with them the unseen enemy.

"Whoever undertakes to share that conflict must acquire whatever is necessary for the task, and lift herself to the required level of endurance, of self-denial, and of loyalties. More than half of my working life has been spent in a great hospital, and I have become familiar with many others, both in this country and elsewhere. I have found in them, and particularly among nurses, the purest unselfishness, the sternest devotion to duty, the simplest and most unaffected bravery, and the richest traditions of disinterested service that I have ever known. . . .

"The nurses of the present generation, with meagre preparation and few advantages, have brought their beloved profession to the point where it now stands. . . . If the nurses of the future work as loyally, as courageously, and as steadfastly, if they hold before them the vision of what nursing should be, as faithfully as their sisters of the past have done, nursing will indeed come into her own."

Miss Nutting is herself a shining example and embodiment of the qualities which she attributes to members of the profession which she adorns.

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