

## SERMONS IN STONES.

### A HIGH ENCOUNTER.

We print below the oration of the Rev. Robert Davis at the laying of the corner-stone of the Nurses' Memorial School, Bagatelle, Bordeaux—the gift to France, as our readers know, of American Nurses.

At this moment and in this place it is the invisible—a thousand times more than the visible—it is the unheard, that raises the occasion up out of the commonplace into a moral importance.

Behind this nurse of America the eye of the spirit can see the long line of working nurses whom she represents. They have wished to erect an enduring memorial to their belief in the profession of nursing. They have wished to put the seal of their admiration, the sanction of their love, upon the careers of the two hundred and eighty-five nurses who paid the cost of being a nurse in the hour of war.

Behind the Directrice of this training-school the eye of the mind can see those who for thirty years have supported her and her ideal; those who have been patient during the long delay, until the public they served were ready for their standard of technique and personal character; those who have by now passed from this world—but we are responsible for this school and its place to-day.

Back in the youth of our race, back on the misty rim of history, when God spoke to men, when a high impulse entered into the souls of men or when men associated themselves in a solemn public obligation, they set a stone upon the face of the earth. The stone was an enduring mark, that time would not destroy, that passers-by would not overlook. And thereafter those who travelled that way bared the head, whispering "Once God was here. Here our fathers engaged themselves for a high encounter."

Dumb Stone, we bid you speak. Other stones will be placed about you, but you will remain the central step of the entry staircase. All who enter and leave this building will touch you as they pass.

We bid you speak to these who come to learn. Tell them that they enter the profession, which, above all that are open to women, demands patience, self-forgetfulness, and every sweet virtue that God puts into the human heart. Tell them that the nurse, who enters a home to help when ordinary helpers have failed, she to whom the defiled reach out their hands for purification, the hopeless for hope, the abandoned for love, may win rewards such as no other profession can hope to merit or receive.

O Dumb Stone, speak to those who pass back and forth, saying that this is one of the few spots where the working women of the two great Republics have met in co-operation; that sisters of different bloods who shall never see one another, have joined in this achievement to aid women to better realise their own powers, and to better serve their lands.

Dead Stone, live! Live, because those in whose name this building is erected were alive. They were drinking deep of the crimson draught of life and danger, when their end came. Those who love them best have wished to rear no dead memorial, no statuary aloof in marble immobility. Their monument is this school, this engine for human welfare. Stone, live! as a symbol that those who have passed from sight still live. They live because each of those who cared for them have resolved to each do their own part and a little more, that among us all the world may not lack the service they would have offered. Live! tell us again that the immortality of our beloved is in our own hands.

Solid Stone, on your stable base, let not the years disturb you. You are the symbol of the deathless force that binds the two Republics together. You represent the fundamental alliance that the maladjustments of the moment may not change. The alliance between France and America is not only political, not only economic, not only historical; the deathless alliance between the countries is based on faith; for both believe that it is the supreme business of a state to equip its youth to serve well, both believe that in giving life one gains it more abundantly. This common faith, held by one land as by the other, is the ground of our union.

### PIONEER NURSES.

Miss B. G. Alexander, R.R.C., speaking to the members of the Witwatersrand Branch of the Trained Nurses' Association, South Africa, on its "Progress and Problems," said: "Before closing, I wish to say something about the pioneer nurses of this country who, by virtue of their experience, tact, personality, and commonsense, have rendered invaluable service to many communities. The necessity for full and special qualifications for hospital posts and public services, is one of quite recent growth, and has arisen with the progress of time and the introduction of Health Visitors, School Nurses, &c. Quite a few of the women holding these posts to-day know something of the truth of the saying that 'the path of the pioneer is hard,' and I regret to say the attitude of the present-day nurses is apt to make the paths of our colleagues still harder. We should try to remember that those of the younger generation have had opportunities to fit themselves for public service in the nursing world which were unheard of 15 or 20 years ago, and I hope you will agree with me when I suggest that the women who have given of their best, and who are growing old in the service of their country, are worthy of our best consideration, and our unstinted generosity. On the one hand we are asking for a tribute fund for superannuated nurses, and on the other hand we say that some of these women who may now be past the heyday of their youth, but who are still doing most excellent work, are in our selfish estimation unfit for the posts they hold, because they lack numerous certificates which they had no opportunity of qualifying for."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)