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EDITORIAL.

THE ETHICS OF SERVICE.

"There is something better than making a living—making a life."—*Lincoln.*

Every profession has its traditions—traditions which are a strength and support to its members in times of danger and difficulty, and the Nursing Profession is fortunate in those which have been handed down to it by its predecessors, for they are traditions of devoted service, of selflessness, of plain living, and high thinking. True the service was not always well informed, any more than medical service was scientific in the past. True the unselfishness of those who nursed the sick was exploited to mean ends, and we have learnt that the worker must be protected, that the health of nurses must not be broken down in restoring that of others, but the fact remains that, consciously, from the study of the lives of those who have gone before us, and unconsciously from the traditions by which we are surrounded, the heritage of our profession is a very high ideal of personal service, which we are in honour bound to hand on to our successors.

Do the present generation always hold aloft as high a tradition of service to the sick as their predecessors? The temper of the age has changed, and the modern idea not unfrequently seems to be to put in a certain minimum number of hours of work—honest work for the most part—and then to turn to the real business of life, that of personal enjoyment.

That was not the ideal of the pioneer nurses, whose life's work was service of the sick, and whose enjoyment was found in that service. The conditions of our work have been changed, but let us take care that we do not, at the same time, eliminate something very precious—the wealth of devotion lavished on the sick, which is outside any contract of service, which was so beautiful and distinguishing a characteristic of our predecessors.

We must never dissociate in our minds the dual nature of nursing. It is a profession, an honourable means of self-support, but it is more, it is a means of serving humanity, of preventing disease and assisting in its cure, of making the transition from this world to the next as easy as may be for those crossing the dark river, and of solacing and serving those who are bereaved. To be in any way sufficient for these duties men and women of the highest mentality, and the greatest sympathy, are needed, in addition to their possessing technical proficiency.

Mechanical perfection alone is not adequate for the solace of suffering humanity. We have to learn that there is something better than making a living—making a life.

THE HEALTH ORGANIZATION OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

The greatest asset of any community, and of any nation, is good health, and it is increasingly apparent that no pains are too great to secure this end. But more, such organisation should not be limited by the boundaries of a country, for no Government, however efficient, can secure the health of its own people without co-operation with the Governments of others. For instance, cholera in the East is a menace to the West, plague travels by the great trade routes, smallpox may be introduced into a country which is free from it by travellers, or articles of commerce, from one where it is indigenous; and we are therefore forced to the conclusion that the Governments of the countries of the civilised world should be associated together for the prevention of disease, and for raising the standard of the health of the Peoples of the world through a great "Health International," under the control of the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs in the countries concerned.

Various efforts have been made at intervals since 1851, when the first European Conference to consider health problems was held, to promote international hygiene, but, as Mr. George E. Vincent, President of the Rockefeller Foundation, states in his Review of the work of the Foundation, in its Report recently issued, "the most significant development in this movement is the recent creation under the League of Nations of a Health Organisation, which has the direct support of fifty-two Nations, and the sympathetic co-operation of the United States. The new body has reached a working agreement with the International Office of Hygiene in Paris, and will doubtless have cordial relations with the International Sanitary Bureau. The program of the League's Health Organisation includes the gathering of vital statistics, prompt notification of epidemics, standardising of vaccines and sera, international conferences, and exchange of health officers, securing of better health conditions for sailors on shipboard and in ports, co-operation with League mandatories, with the Commission on Opium, and with the International Labour Office." At the present time members of the medical profession from some twenty countries are arriving in this country on a visit of ten weeks' duration, with the object of studying Public Health administration in Great Britain, the scheme being arranged by the Health Branch of the League of Nations.

Whatever may be the views of individuals as to the usefulness of the League of Nations, there can surely be only one as to the desirability of the work of its Health Branch, which is greatly facilitated by the generous financial assistance given by the Trustees of the Rockefeller Foundation.

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