

THE TRAINED NURSE'S PART IN PEACE.

The following Address, prepared by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, was then read by Miss Pearse:—

MADAM PRESIDENT, MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES AND FRATERNAL DELEGATES,—My first word to this great Congress—the first convened since we parted in Cologne in 1912, planning to meet at San Francisco in 1915, must be one of joy and thankfulness, that the strands of the threefold cord of unity of thought, sympathy, and purpose, by which our Confederation of Workers is bound together, have proved strong enough to hold during the years which have intervened, and that we meet again to-day, not only with our membership unimpaired, but strengthened by the addition of new Councils, and new Hon. Vice-Presidents. No greater proof could be given of the endurance of a tie formed not by material things, but by aspiration towards the ideal, and a common striving after the realities of the Spirit. In all parts of the world nurses—members of our International Council of Nurses—have, during the intervening years, been doing their duty with courage, fortitude and singleness of purpose, looking backwards to the inspiration of the past, looking forward to the hope held by the future, and we here to-day thank them—one and all—our comrades in each country where a National Council of Nurses is affiliated to the International Council, that they have held high the tradition of our profession, and that the aftermath of the carnage of war has been lessened because of their steadfastness of purpose, and of the application of their skill to the relief of suffering and the cure of disease. Members of the International Council of Nurses, as its Founder, I salute you and I thank you.

Since last we met, the trained nurses of the world have come into intimate touch with the horror and ravages of war, and the tragedy which follows in its train, and in consequence no profession more ardently desires the blessings of Peace. We have, therefore, to realise our duty in this connection—What part can we take in promoting civilisation through respect for human life?

The Nurse's Part in Peace is to prove by her consistent altruistic methods of life, the grace and moral value of kindness. If the trained nurses of the world united to demonstrate the beauty of holiness, the blessings of peace between the Nations would be surely and imperceptibly advanced. In the tangled politics of the world trained nurses hold a specially privileged position, inasmuch as down through the ages their occupation has been the humanitarian work of the prevention and cure of disease. There is no nationality in nursing. Wherever in peace or in war we find sickness or suffering there it is our duty to endeavour to heal and to comfort, be the patient friend or foe.

From the moral standpoint the nurse, often the instrument in the application of practical medicine, realises the enormous influence of the development of scientific medicine in its ardent struggle for the health and happiness of the human race, and the knowledge that in the laboratories of Europe, at the present time, investigations are being made by scientists with the aim of discovering new instruments of torture, and

poisons deadlier than any at present known, capable of killing by violence, or slow agony, large sections of the community, should arouse throughout our profession a keen sense of indignation—realising as we do the sanctity of life. The life joyous—free from horror—mutilation—grief.

Why should not we as nurses undertake a holier investigation than that of those working in darkness seeking after methods for the destruction of mankind, and explore the directions in which the desire for peace may penetrate the human mind? The mind is a receptive principle—can we not therefore from our almost sacred relation to humanity insinuate therein an irresistible element of harmony in pacification of elemental passions?

And here let us remind ourselves that the essential essence of nursing is not merely to afford skilled help to suffering and diseased humanity, but something far higher than that. It is to endeavour to appropriate the spiritual force which is the common heritage of our profession, bequeathed to us by many noble men and women, our predecessors, who have served the sick of all ages in every land; a reserve force upon which so long as we walk worthily we may freely draw, a force potent with grace, so that, in helping to heal the body, those to whom we minister may discern the fineness of motive which inspires our service and may be influenced thereby. In a materialistic age it is a nurse's high privilege to exercise and be a living example of heroic qualities—courage—self-control—self-denial.

Great is the force of example.

Great and selfless standards of life in individuals alone create great and generous Peoples, and it might be the aspiration of every nurse to strengthen the Nation of which she is a component part by developing those heroic qualities which may influence the world to love Peace and ensue it.

We must not however permit our longing for world harmony to obscure our vision.

We realise that War is barbarous, that we must seek to control the animal in man through his reasoning faculties, and that this is only to be done by the gradual evolution of moral force in conflict with the physical instincts evolved by our instinctive sense of self-preservation throughout the ages. War may be, and is, defended in the maintenance of civilisation and liberty. It is argued that the peoples to-day are not yet sufficiently civilised to set aside force, that in many parts of the world human nature is in a very elemental stage, where life is to the strong, and where materialism is in conflict with the Spiritual in man. We cannot deny this, but we nurses have met together once again to reaffirm our belief in the principle that the best good of the world will be advanced by greater unity of thought, sympathy and purpose, that citizenship of the world is an essential qualification of those whose aim is to make it healthier and more harmonious, and that by interchange of experience we shall not only as nurses, but as human entities increase our sympathy and understanding until we become an indivisible whole and wield potent power for righteousness.

Moral force must ultimately subdue the lower instincts in the human race, and the Little Sisters of Sympathy federated in the International Council of Nurses have a

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