

Miss M. Adelaide Nutting, R.N., to Miss Nina D. Gage, President of the International Council of Nurses:—

*July 3rd, 1929.*

My dear Miss Gage,

Some time during the current week, I understand, the question of the Florence Nightingale Memorial is to come forward for criticism.

I am venturing to send you a note on the subject, regretting deeply my inability to be present and to share in the discussion of a question in which I am greatly interested.

When in the year 1912, at the Congress in Cologne, the idea of establishing a Florence Nightingale Chair of Nursing was proposed, it was accepted by the Council as an eminently appropriate memorial to one whose ideas on education were far in advance of her day and were among her most notable characteristics, and who through education had aimed at, and had achieved, the transformation of nursing. It was appropriate also because there was then no available opportunity in Europe, and but one in America, where nurses could secure any of the higher educational advantages required in the growth and development of their work. To provide such opportunities for nurses through a Florence Nightingale Chair established, presumably, in the University of London, in the city where she had spent the greater part of her life, and the centre from which most of her activities radiated, seemed indeed a worthy and fitting tribute to offer to the memory of this great Englishwoman.

But the war, which intervened shortly after, put an end for some years to the work of the International Council of Nurses, and in the interval changes took place which have resulted in the establishment in London of certain institutions interested in the education of nurses and actively concerned in efforts to provide opportunities for the special study needed by them. Through these already existing foundations it seems clear that the work offered for nurses at Bedford College and King's College, both of London University, may be so expanded as to satisfy their needs.

If this view of the situation is correct, then the question would arise as to what other kind of a memorial to Florence Nightingale might be considered.

I would like to suggest, as a possibility, the establishment of a Florence Nightingale Foundation—something of sufficiently large scope and purpose to undertake not one task, but to form an International Centre for study and research in nursing and the kindred problems of hospitals and public health, upon which things Florence Nightingale's mind played with such amazing power and originality.

One of the first acts of such a foundation would be to secure the right place in which to house it and from which to carry on its work, to gather together there all her books, letters, manuscripts, portraits, personal belongings, and other things intimately associated with Miss Nightingale's life and work. Some of these are now being scattered widely, and there should be some such place found where they could be brought together, appropriately housed and arranged, and open to be visited by nurses from all parts of the world and the thousands of other persons who could thus catch a glimpse of the nature of her surroundings and envisage in some measure the vast range of her thought and labour.

For the establishment of such a centre as a memorial to a great person we have a long and rich precedent to guide us. There is the Carlyle house in Chelsea, the Dickens house in Bloomsbury, the Johnson house in Gough Square, the Keats house in Hampstead, and no one who has visited the Keats house in Rome can forget the treasures of books, pictures, letters, and other things so carefully guarded and tenderly cherished by lovers of the poet. In Paris there is Victor Hugo's house in the Place des Vosges, and in

Tours the house of Honore de Balzac. In America there is the Edgar Allan Poe Shrine at Richmond, the Longfellow house at Cambridge, and the groups of historic houses in Concord, and many others.

But recently we are seeing in the gift of Darwin's home, Down House, in Kent, to the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and of Cobden's house in Sussex to the Cobden Memorial Association, new ways of honouring those whose contributions to knowledge have affected all humanity. Both of these famous homes are to be used as centres for study and research, and for conferences on the scientific and political and economic questions with which the names and lives of each are identified, and endowments are established to carry on their work.

In keeping with this new conception of a memorial as something beyond a shrine—something filled with a living, growing purpose—is the idea which I believe we should try to embody in a Florence Nightingale Foundation. It should not be restricted to the achievement of a single object, but devoted to the development of educational work, instigating and assisting important lines of research in the fields of Miss Nightingale's greatest interest, the publication of studies and reports and monographs—there are many such yet to be written about various phases of Miss Nightingale's own work; to the creation of certain fellowships for students of unusual promise, and to such other activities as the years may show the necessity for undertaking.

The Foundation should be created through the initiative of the International Council of Nurses, with the active co-operation and support of individuals and societies of suitable character. It should be established in the form of a permanent Trust, endowed, and under the direction of a body of Trustees composed of men and women of very great eminence, representing different countries and including, if possible, some member of Miss Nightingale's family. That these Trustees should hold a proper conception of the province and functions of the Foundation, and be of the kind who would forward them with energy and enthusiasm, goes without saying.

To set forth afresh in this way the imperishable glory of Miss Nightingale's work—to more vigorously advance the ideas and ideals which she so unceasingly laboured to establish, should be to stir to new effort the imagination and energies of nurses of the future.

If the Council accepts the idea of this kind of a memorial to one of the greatest women in all history, who is so peculiarly our own, I trust it will place it as a definite suggestion to be considered either by the present committee, or by a new one to be created for the purpose.

Believe me to be,

Yours faithfully,

M. ADELAIDE NUTTING.

The President reminded the Meeting that in 1912, at the Meeting of the International Council of Nurses held at Cologne, she had proposed that an International Memorial to Miss Florence Nightingale should be considered, which proposal was seconded by Miss Nutting. The suggestion made a great appeal to Miss Nutting and she was elected Chair of the Committee to consider the question. Owing to the Great War little progress had resulted, but Miss Nutting's inspiring communication would, she felt sure, arouse interest in the proposal.

No doubt the Committee on International Affairs would consider the communication, in the meanwhile she hoped that an invitation might be sent to Miss Nutting to confer in London with the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain at some appropriate time.

The President had consulted Miss Lloyd-Still on the matter, as they were both members of the Nightingale

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