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## EDITORIAL.

### THINGS OF THE SPIRIT.

From the earliest ages the art of nursing has been an occupation pre-eminently in the hands of women, though men to a limited extent have also borne their part. There is evidence of the care of the sick, and of the maintenance of hospitals for their reception, in India, in Greece, in Rome, before the Christian Era, but unquestionably great impetus was given to nursing in the early Church, by the teaching of our Divine Master and His compassion for the sick, and for well nigh two thousand years it has been continuously carried on with more or less efficiency.

The devotion of women in the first centuries after Christ in their care of the sick was as remarkable as it was conspicuous. Nursing Orders of women workers were the deaconesses and widows. Later, many Orders of nuns undertook nursing duties, and in Roman Catholic countries the care of the sick is largely in their hands at the present day.

Many noble Greek and Roman ladies devoted themselves with ardour to the care of the sick, and in their "History of Nursing," Miss Nutting and Miss Dock tell us that "the Order of Deaconesses of the early Christian Church may be well contemplated with affectionate respect as having laid the foundations of the nurses' calling and of all modern works of charity. Probably no sweeter examples of lives spontaneously spent in loving service are to be found in the world than those of the workers of the early Christian Church, while the pure glow of the Master's teaching was yet undimmed, and before worldly ambition and selfishness had crept in." Later we have as an example, the Sisterhood of St. Vincent de Paul, founded by that sweetest and most human of saints in 1617, which exists as a Nursing Order to the present day, and the celebrated Order of Deaconesses, founded at Kaiserswerth by Friederike Fliedner, in 1836, to both of which Florence Nightingale turned for instruction when she was preparing herself for her life's work. Thus the nursing of the sick has been developed upon a religious foundation, and the threefold cord of faith, hope and charity has been interwoven in the lives of women who practised it, and tender, if uninstructed, zeal has been characteristic of those upheld by a strong sense of vocation for a life's work.

In this country, with the dissolution of the Religious Houses, Nursing passed into secular hands, and a period of decadence supervened, until Florence Nightingale,

impelled also by a sense of vocation, and equipped for her task by a liberal education and the power to apply it, declared that nursing was a calling worthy of the devotion of the best of womankind, and claimed their services. Claimed, moreover, that it should be based on scientific as well as on practical teaching, and that it should be as thorough as it was possible to be. Nothing less was worthy of so high a vocation.

It was a high demand, and its appeal received, as high demands are wont to do, a response from earnest women of all classes, prepared for self-sacrifice, who expended themselves willingly in the service of the sick.

It is now common knowledge how the nursing services in the hospitals were reformed, the sick, cared for not only with devotion but with intelligence based on knowledge, by nurses whose psychological outlook was no mean part of their influence on their patients for good, both physically and mentally, as with quietness and confidence they attended to their needs.

The threefold cord of faith, hope, and charity is not quickly broken. It binds, we believe, the majority of nurses to-day. But with the unrestricted freedom of women of all classes there is a danger lest its power should be lessened, lest Nursing should be dethroned from its high position in the regard of those who have adopted it as their profession, lest they forget that next to the ministry of the Church it is the most sacred of callings, and that the public expect a higher standard of nurses than of any other profession.

There is, we believe, at the present day, room for a society in which entrants to the Nursing Profession voluntarily and deliberately pledge themselves, by a simple rule, to regard their work as nurses as the practical exposition of their duty to God and their duty to their neighbour.

### THE DUTY OF THE VOTE.

For years women strove with amazing energy and self sacrifice to obtain the privilege of the Parliamentary vote, and when they at last became enfranchised thousands failed to avail themselves of the rights of citizenship. Nurses have on many occasions proved their indifference to professional enfranchisement under the Nurses Registration Acts, and this note is to remind the Fellows of the British College of Nurses that they will this week receive their Ballot Papers for the election of two Fellows to the Council of the College. We hope that they will faithfully record their votes and return their papers to the Secretary before the 1st of July next.

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