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EDITORIAL.

"THE SOVEREIGNTY OF MAN LIETH HID IN KNOWLEDGE."—*Bacon.*

The world is a vast storehouse of knowledge of which we can only touch the smallest fringe, yet there is no greater joy than its acquisition. But first we must decide in what direction we shall concentrate.

For nurses there can be but one answer. Art, Science, Literature, all have their attractions, but our one absorbing passion must be the pursuit of such knowledge as will make us more efficient members of our profession, practically and theoretically, enjoying the exercise of any talents we may possess if they help us in our work, but holding them lightly, and relinquishing them willingly, if they interfere with our main purpose in life.

And first we must study the history of our profession of which the great body of nurses are supremely ignorant. It was not, indeed, until 1907 that Professor M. Adelaide Nutting, M.A., and Miss Lavinia L. Dock undertook the difficult task of writing "A History of Nursing—the Evolution of Nursing Systems from the Earliest Times to the Foundation of the First English and American Training Schools for Nurses," dedicating it to "All Members of the Nursing Profession." This was followed in 1912 by two more volumes having "special reference to the work of the past thirty years." Before that time those who wished to acquire such knowledge had to search the files of *The Nursing Record* and THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING, and the few other records to which they had access.

The profession has been fortunate in having at its disposal a history up to 1912 written by two of its most learned and brilliant members, and every student nurse should absorb its contents. Knowing the outlines of the history of nursing in the civilised countries of the world she will have a background of invaluable knowledge upon which to continue her studies, and will be delivered from the narrowness which inclines her to think that there is no nursing history beyond the walls of her own training school, and certainly none beyond her own country.

A generous donation was recently received from India by the British College of Nurses for its History of Nursing Section, from one of its Fellows, for the interesting reason that at her first examination in the Urdu language she felt the lack of any knowledge of the history of nursing. She was asked at her oral examination to give the history of nursing in Europe—an impossible

task, by the way, to set any examinee. But this one realised to her discomfiture that she knew next to nothing to say in English on the subject, and certainly her Urdu vocabulary at that time would not have conveyed her very limited knowledge to her Indian examiner, who was trying to be very kind in giving her, as he thought, her favourite subject to discourse upon.

No sooner, therefore, did our colleague learn that the British College of Nurses had established a History of Nursing Section than she took the practical step of sending a donation in its support.

The study of nursing history is an absorbing one, and those who first undertake it as a serious duty, which is indeed one aspect of it, will find that it may become a fascinating hobby. At home in off-duty hours a search in secondhand book shops will result in the acquisition of many treasures, and the reading rooms at the British Museum are a mine of wealth.

But nurses travel far afield and they can render valuable service to the history of their profession by collecting data hitherto unknown, and sending them to those who are making collections at home, and by giving lectures, preferably illustrated by lantern slides, in the countries in which they are working, thus helping to disseminate knowledge.

Education by the eye is indeed one of the most effective ways of imparting knowledge to those with limited education, to whom book learning presents difficulties, and nursing history lends itself specially to this method, as well as giving enjoyment to those of more advanced knowledge.

We have known, for instance, for many years the story of the foundation by Rahere, the King's jester, of St. Bartholomew's Hospital and Priory Church, Smithfield, but who that saw the wonderful pageant in the Church of St. Bartholomew the Great can doubt that they have an incomparably clearer picture of this in their minds; from the vision of the monk on an island in the Tiber to the presentation to Rahere by King Henry I of the Royal Charter in his completed church.

Another method within the power of many nurses of contributing to nursing history would be to make a serious study of photography. To take really good photographs of eminent nurses and historic scenes—such, for instance, as those obtainable at International Congresses of Nurses and on other occasions—would be of real value.

If there be first the willing mind we shall find numerous methods by which we can further the cause we have at heart.

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