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## EDITORIAL.

### MINISTERING SPIRITS.

In the flesh we were separated from our friends by their going into the next room only—a door, a partition divided us; but what can separate two souls? Often I fancy that we can perceive the presence of a good spirit communicating thoughts to us: are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister unto us.—FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

As the years pass in swift succession it is well that we should pause to consider how far the enthusiasms, the ideals, the aspirations of our youth have been translated into realities in our later years.

The majority of those who began their training as nurses a quarter of a century or more ago did so, we believe, with the clear intention of devoting themselves to the service of the sick and held that they were consecrated—set apart—with this object. How could it be otherwise? It would be their high privilege to qualify themselves so that by their skill the sum of the world's anguish should be decreased. Theirs again, by their ministrations, to render more easy the passing of the dying "or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken" and "fears shall be in the way," when in its extremity broken humanity needs consciously or unconsciously the support of a calm, resolute, comforting and skilful friend. As the mystery of her calling penetrates the nurse in training more deeply she realises the profound truth of the belief held by the late Sir Clifford Allbutt, Regius Professor of Medicine in the University of Cambridge, who wrote, on the "Relation of the Soul to the Body," "I need scarcely say that this distinction (between soul and body) is but a purely logical division; indeed the two are not even hemispheres lying side by side, but the one is so diffused in the other, and so interpenetrates it, that in life they are one. It appears to me then that as the way to the soul is very often through the body, so also a way to the body is to be found through the soul."

And Dr. Chavasse, most sane, sympathetic, and beloved of bishops, speaking to the great Jubilee Congress on District Nursing held in Liverpool more than a quarter of a century ago said:—"I speak what I know. Have you not known cases where the patient is hovering between life and death, when some sweet, gentle and kind nurse, or some able and skilful doctor, or some wise and sympathetic minister of religion, has been able to breathe some word of hope and strength which has just given the failing will of the patient the necessary power to help

him to tide over the crisis, and to come back again into the world of the living? Have not some of you known cases where the mind or the spirit has had more to do with the disease than the body, when all medical help was vain, when some such words of faith and hope have accomplished what medicine could never do? What I ask you, my friends, as a very humble worker, who looks with admiration on a nurse whenever he sees one, and always feels inclined to take off his hat to her for her noble and heroic work, and for the blessing she confers on humanity, is to remember that your patients have souls as well as bodies."

We wonder, were the Bishop alive now whether he would wish to take off his hat to every nurse he met. There are many nurses, we know, who desire nothing better than to spend themselves in the service of the sick without measure, but we must sorrowfully own that there are others who consider their work as a means of livelihood alone and not as a sacred vocation also. Such nurses miss the spirit of nursing. Through the self-sacrificing work of the pioneers of nursing education and State Registration the nurses of to-day have gained in scientific knowledge and in technical skill. Have they gained also in devotion to their profession, and in tenderness in dealing with the sick? Let them cherish these as their most precious possessions.

"Sickness and distress, whether of body or soul, or of both together, should move any humane heart to pity. The professional man and woman offering to the public a service so necessary, ministering to needs so pitiful, possessing a knowledge so special and peculiar, should be moved to a genuine compassion, and should equip themselves as excellently as possible for every emergency of practice, because they are the sole and necessary recourse of the miserable, the suffering, and the afflicted."

The endeavour at the present time to convert Nursing into a trade, when work shall cease at a given moment regardless of the needs of the sick, is one to be resisted to the utmost. Years ago, Miss Mary H. Greenwood, at a meeting of the National League of Nursing Education, U.S.A., said: "Through no fault of our own, but rather owing to the conditions now prevailing in educational and working matters, it seems as if we must needs soon go out into the world to fight for our own right to do the best work we know, instead of the less good which the uninformed are willing to accept."

Let us claim our right to do the best we know. "What we need to keep at eternally is the cultivation of the spirit back of the work, that makes life worth living for ourselves and for others."

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