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EDITED BY MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK, REGISTERED NURSE.

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## EDITORIAL.

### THE POWER OF PERSONALITY.

For the nursing profession throughout the world the month of May is dominated by the personality of Florence Nightingale, whose birthday occurs on the twelfth of the month and is commemorated with honour from Great Britain to China and Japan in the East, to British Columbia and California in the West, and South Africa in the Southern hemisphere, and though just upon a quarter of a century has passed since her death these celebrations increase in number and prominence, as the pure flame of her life's work glows with greater intensity.

At St. Thomas's Hospital, London, where Miss Nightingale founded the Training School for nurses bearing her name, the Archbishop of Canterbury gave the address at the annual commemoration service in the hospital chapel, those present including Princess Helena Victoria, Sir Arthur Stanley (Treasurer of the Hospital), Mr. W. H. Bonham Carter (Secretary of the Nightingale Training School), Mr. Gerald Bonham Carter and Miss J. F. Bonham Carter, relatives of Miss Nightingale, Dame Alicia Lloyd Still (Matron of the Hospital and Superintendent of the Nightingale Training School), a large number of members of the nursing staff, trained and in training, as well as many "old Nightingales," and leading members of the Nursing Profession.

The Archbishop said "they should never forget what was accomplished by that simple, brave, undaunted woman in her day and generation. It was very difficult for them to realise the condition of things with regard to the healing of sickness in her time. They must thank God for the advance of medical knowledge and skill since then, but perhaps the chief advance had been in the function of nursing. Florence Nightingale had a wonderful power of overcoming. She faced the facts as she saw them with ruthless reality. When she returned to England from the Crimea she encountered indifference, opposition, and obstruction. But those were things, not to frighten or deter her, but to be overcome. The power by which she overcame them was not any special attractiveness—for she had little of that; it was not even the gift of persistence. It was the power of her personality. Nothing could resist it; no indolent official and no vested interest could withstand it. Beyond doubt the advent of Florence Nightingale many years ago entirely changed the whole aspect of affairs with regard to the healing and tending of the sick."

We endorse the Archbishop's claim as to the power of Miss Nightingale's personality. It was, indeed, of such

far-reaching potency—which had its origin in mystic spirituality—that the world has come under its spell, and few even of the Princes of the Church have wielded a like influence, but we venture to question His Grace's dictum that she had little attractiveness. The record of history, the experiences of those who came into intimate contact with her, are a direct negative to this view, and the beautiful portraits of her in youth and old age depict her as a woman of noble, gracious and attractive personality, as well as one of immense mental force. She was indeed a woman of destiny, richly endowed with the gifts which enabled her to accomplish an almost superhuman task.

Had Miss Nightingale had little attractiveness would the sick and wounded soldiers in the wards of the Crimean hospitals have turned to kiss her shadow as she passed by?

The Archbishop concluded an inspiring address by saying that "in the midst of the difficulties, sufferings, and manifold tribulations of the world, the power which overcame was not the greatness of gifts, the warmth of ideals, or the strength of principles; it was personality. Some of the nations of the world at the present time in their depression, confusion, and uncertainty had found and were finding—such as Italy, Germany, and America—a hope and confidence that they could overcome through the influence of great personalities. He thought they might not unnaturally hope and pray that in this country there might rise up, not men of the kind exactly that he had indicated, but powerful personalities who could touch the imagination and strengthen the will of the people in the overcoming of their difficulties. It was always worth remembering in these days that the whole essence of Christianity was not the admiration of an example, not even the somewhat pathetic aspiration after an ideal; it was the eternal influence of a supreme personality."

"To touch the imagination and strengthen the will of the people in the overcoming of their difficulties," these are qualities needed by men and women who would act as leaders of their compatriots to-day. Mr. John Buchan, M.P., Lord High Commissioner to the Church of Scotland, in his opening address at the General Assembly in Edinburgh recently, said that among masses of men there is to-day a loss of self-confidence; the citizen has forgotten his old pride of standing squarely on his feet.

These are words which members of the Nursing Profession should take to heart lest they also are affected by the tendency of the times and forget to stand squarely on their feet as did Florence Nightingale in her splendid life-long struggle for better conditions for the care of the sick and the health of the nation.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)