

THE HOLIDAYS AND BEYOND.

Awake, awake! the world is young,
For all its heavy years of thought,
The starkest fights must still be fought,
The most surprising songs be sung.

J. ELROY FLECKER.

On lifting a pen, at the close of the holiday season, it is curious to note how its directions, the thoughts it follows, change from more defined lines given to it during the time when the varied events in the profession more often arise to be discussed. The tendency at this season is not to look back, as in a retrospect, to view what has been accomplished; for that a few reports suffice just to place in history the story of the growth of this movement or another. And so, instead of looking across the perspective of the past, we like to look up to the hills of endeavour in front of us. There is really something very analogous in human life, and its seasons and rhythms, to the life of the earth itself. In summertime she is resting or, as it were, surrendering herself to a kind of sun-worship, although this resting or surrender may not be very apparent unless one looks beneath the surface of things. When the summer is over the forces of the earth begin gradually the commencement of an activity that is to find its climax in the flowering and fruition of another year. And the being of man, the microcosm, as philosophers call it, follows, in this respect, very much the activity of the earth or macrocosm. We have our seasons of activity and preparation and then those of rest and recreation; at each one's outlook on life changes in some degree.

When the holidays are over our inclinations turn towards activity, and thoughts of what lies before us to be accomplished, provided that the daily turmoil of each day's events does not prove too retardative. Each one, who has work to do, recognises in greater or less degree that the time has come to set out on another round of the seasons with purposefulness but, although this point of view has influenced our choice of a subject it is not solely responsible. The real impulse to such choice lay rather in a chance remark dropped recently by a gentle lady which was arresting as coming unexpectedly from such lips, although in her is reflected the spirit of a husband and half a dozen brothers to whom activity is "as meat and drink." The remark referred to was made in connection with one of those individualities whom Robert Louis Stevenson describes as being "like bags pushed from behind"—people who have little individuality, no free thought and who are quite content to let things remain as they are so long as they are reasonably comfortable themselves; they acknowledge no duty to the community that does not closely affect themselves. Speaking of one of these this little lady quietly and casually dismissed her as a subject of conversation with the remark: "Oh well you see she has given up the ghost." The words were spoken neither unkindly nor uncharitably but simply as a statement of fact. The one to whom they referred had little of spirit, vision, originality or energy left, but her physical body remained alive and would pursue a perfectly comfortable and more or less vegetable or animal existence in the satisfaction of moderate desires. The remark introduced several very interesting psychological aspects which we need not pursue further here.

To revert to the holidays and their purpose is to recognise that the latter is twofold; the very word holidays implies that they are to bring about a re-creation of the spirit, even more than of the physical powers, and thereby a continuance in the evolution of what has been accomplished in the past. And thus we find that members of the various groups and societies of nurses are getting together and

endeavouring, in a corporate manner, to prepare for a year's work again, so to keep their profession a living organism in the body politic, with a spirit alive, refusing to give up the ghost or to be guided by, instead of guiding, the influences that have bearing on its developments and its affairs. There will always be those, but too often they are in the minority, who refuse to allow that their profession shall degenerate into an organism which is to possess merely the herd mind or a sort of common group soul to be dominated by those who have no real understanding of its needs and possibilities.

There are many matters of high importance absorbing the attention of those who have sought to lift the burden of professional progress, as apart from merely individual concerns, and at this time it falls to all individual members of the profession to decide how far they are going to allow them to bear the whole weight of professional organisation; in fact it is a matter for each to decide whether she will awake to her individual responsibility or just remain among the "bags" of whom Stevenson wrote. In this connection there comes to mind a sentence from one of the greatest of the masters of literature—"Him I love who craves the impossible." It seems a good one to drop into our minds as a guiding star at the commencement of another year of work. We have had the value of such a thought exemplified in many aspects of history and nowhere more than in the story of our own profession, if we glance back over the span of more than three quarters of a century, taking it as from the commencement of the Crimean War and events just subsequent to that. Since then we have had pioneers who "craved the impossible," and we do not refer merely to the leaders and exemplars in new movements but also to those who have followed their standard, to all those who in fact have sought to bring about things that existed first only as visions and dreams or rather as "imaginings" in the old fine sense of the word. The "imagers" (another old-world term) set up the images, the ideas, which, at the beginning, seemed so unattainable. When Goethe wrote that sentence he was not thinking of anything in the nature of a child crying for the moon but of those who had "faith to remove mountains," these are the real creators of the future and if many more would "examine themselves" and as a result decide to join the band of adventurers on the road to evolution they would, by the force of their purpose, help to produce an impetus upon the "bags" that would bring about more corporate strength in achieving new privileges for the profession and protecting those already won; thus would they aid those, who have "craved the impossible," to evolve the "impossible" into the "possible" and then, once it has become the "probable," to bring it right into the realm of established things.

That is the kind of spirit to which we would point in these short reflections on the colouring that our outlook should take now that the holidays are gone. Divine discontent is not mere dissatisfaction but just this "craving for the impossible" that evolves into creative power *when imagination has drawn the will into its sphere and dominates it*. At the opening of another year of work we urge all those interested in the affairs of their profession, to possess their spirit in freedom in spite of opposition, and often enough derision as well. Remember that, at the opposite pole of the "impossible" there is always the question of the "why not" or the "wherefore not" and here it is the question that matters, not the assertive and limiting "impossible." These are just a few considerations on the psychology or, if you prefer it, the philosophy of endeavour written as a kind of prologue to the policy that the B.J.N. will continue to pursue as, month by month, it seeks to carry to you records of events relating to the profession and their significance.

I. M.

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