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## EDITORIAL.

### THE COMMEMORATION OF FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

#### THE FIRST ORATION.

Those who were present at the meeting of the International Congress of Nurses in the Central Hall, Westminster, on July 21st, 1937, when Sir George Newman G.B.E., K.C.B., M.D., D.C.L., F.R.C.P., F.R.C.S., delivered the First Oration in honour of Florence Nightingale, and at which we, as Founder of the International Council of Nurses, were privileged to preside, will never forget the inspiration of the occasion, as the great audience of over 3,000 nurses, including delegates from 41 countries, listened to this distinguished physician, who for so many years has been a devoted student of the life of Florence Nightingale, unfold in fine language and with sympathetic understanding the story of the incomparable leader, of whom the nurses of the world are so justly proud. "We do well," said Sir George Newman, "to remember her here to-day, and count up the thoughts and deeds with which she moved the heart of England. It is not without significance that this great representative assembly of nurses of many nations and kindreds and tongues and religions should have one common bond in the great and incomparable name of Miss Florence Nightingale." Florence Nightingale's life, said Sir George Newman, may be thought of in three subdivisions. Her romantic girlhood and early training, discipline and experience at Kaiserswerth and elsewhere, culminating in what she believed and declared to be "a divine call" or commission to be a hospital nurse. Then, secondly, came the short middle period of service under the British War Office as "Superintendent of the female nursing establishment in the English General Military Hospitals in Turkey" for two years during the Crimean War (1854-1856), which created her fame and brought to her the homage of the world. Lastly, there was a third period of the remaining 40 years of her active life (1856-1895), filled to the brim with an amazing output of constructive statecraft. When we come to consider it carefully, and critically, historically, scientifically and without the aid of the invention of cunningly devised fables, we find it a most amazing record. Its length, its variety, its adventure, its combination of recluse and publicist, of aristocrat and democrat, of religious mystic and practical reformer; its astounding volume of industry, year in, year out, over three generations; its insight and foresight; its world-wide comprehension, and its tremendous harvest—all contribute to make her life a story standing by itself in the history of mankind.

This story Sir George Newman proceeded to unfold, showing his heroine as a woman of many facets "and all the time a hospital nurse—always observing and collating, always for bold action, always ready and reliable when needed, sometimes to be persuaded, sometimes immovable as a rock—as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

He showed Miss Nightingale's work to be "varied and prolonged, yet it was all of one piece, with little or no alien element or diversion from a straight line of purpose," and he gave this wise advice: "In order that her disciples may make their contribution, they will bear in mind that though they may wisely endeavour to emulate, they should not attempt to imitate Miss Nightingale. We may appreciate her as a national and international possession for which the human family must ever be grateful, but we shall not heighten or enhance such appreciation by allowing 'the dead hand of the past' to be laid too heavily upon us. She herself would have said that advance in *new times*, *new knowledge* and *new methods* is still greatly needed. We are not called upon to pledge ourselves to-day that we also will do what Miss Nightingale *did*—it cannot be—but we may fairly aspire, in our own problems and in our own lands, times and ways, to act upon the high plane of her motive and objectives, expanding both their occasion and operation.

"In the presence of an international assembly of nurses for the healing of the nations, one can hardly escape the reflection, what an inestimable gain for the whole world it would be if, as well as neutralising the wounded men and women of our generation, each nation would learn the wisdom of neutralising its traditional lack of appreciation of other nations, the mutual under-valuations and particular shortcomings and the ignorance—prejudices which so easily beset us all. For to *know* and to *understand* is always to make juster judgments of men. Our true valuation of Florence Nightingale would find most appropriate expression, yes, and would choose the better part; first, in gratefully accepting with knowledge and with understanding, the inspiration of her life and work and its spiritual foundation; and secondly, in planning our own day's enterprise in order that it shall both *extend the frontiers of life* and *enlarge its opportunity* for the men, women and children of all nations."

To Sir George Newman for his brilliant and understanding Oration the nurses of the world owe a debt of very sincere gratitude "for to know and to understand is always to make juster judgments of men." This Oration should be in the possession of every nurse.

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