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Editorial.

The Art of Living.

THE ART OF LIVING AND WORKING successfully depends entirely on the nature of the individual, and at no time during this undoubted revolutionary change in the history of our nursing has it been more necessary to exert the art of living to its fullest. In spite of the many obstacles which continue to block our view, we are fortunate to be living in an era which will go down as one of the most colourful in history. Nursing at the moment would appear to be full of confusion and dreadful possibilities, but we, as British nurses, wherever our niche may be, have a peculiar responsibility for the part which we as individuals can play in averting some of the disasters.

Although living in a wonderful age of great scientific discovery, it is essentially a materialistic age, and in the course of our work we meet those who seek for a "safe investment" which will not be affected by the changes and chances of human affairs—a vain quest. There are those of us who believe that Man has also another side to his make-up—for want of a better word the things we usually refer to as "spiritual"; and in this sphere, the "safe investment," free from all such risks is in those moral qualities which we have been taught in our childhood, belong to the changeless character of God himself. They are the ultimate realities and spiritual securities which can never depreciate in value and which cannot be written off or destroyed.

They include sincerity, truth, sympathy and kindness. When exercised in our work, they comprise all happiness and embrace every virtue; not only in our own lives, but more importantly, in the lives of those with whom we are constantly coming into contact. How best can these show themselves in our attitude to those for whom Life has become difficult through sickness?

We are told that unity is strength and it is, no doubt, but the art of true living denotes that Life is individual far more than it is communal and the things we do together are more often less important than the things which we do by ourselves. We may form a large community but our souls are our own entirely and remain separate. Our feet may be led, but how disastrous if our heads are led in the same way, and for this reason, we may be inspired by others but we must not be submerged into minds of them, unless we are prepared to lose the right to individual thought and action. Difference of opinion is always healthy when it is met with tolerance, but tolerance is derived only from a well-furnished mind. It is essentially a gift which is hard to practise.

Nature abhors uniformity and yet there are, unfortunately, many unimaginative nit-wits who love

uniformity and who are seldom happy except when they are doing the same thing each day at the same time and hoping that everyone else will do likewise. The cold impersonal individual tied to routine, who appears to have no soul, gives little and gains less. It has been said that the peace of hard and fast uniformity would be the peace of slavery and death. There will always be the different views of opinion, for neither men nor women are made out of one mould. Many toilers, many minds and the secret of interest is surprise.

We do not lack courage. Words are not enough—the true working of our function in Life will make itself felt. Of course, we are all more than a little apprehensive at this time, but looking back is a salutary exercise, in that it rebukes so many of the fears and apprehensions which proved quite groundless. Many doubts and surprises and misunderstandings mar the perfection of our daily duties, but when we have gone forward over the years and looked back, we shall see the completed pattern proving that "there is a purpose in all things."

Our destiny is within our own hands, we shall not be led with the flock to change with the times, neither can we accept a planned or mapped profession rigidly and mechanically set out for us. Where there is evidence of that which can only prove detrimental to the whole, then we must each in the words of Shakespeare:—

"Prevent it—resist it, let it not be so,

Lest child, child's children cry against you woe."

A garden is made beautiful for the artist by a variety of shrubs and flowers, derived only from well-tended and fertile soil; music is produced by the combination of independently true notes; good literature is produced by many different thinkers, possessing qualities of style and matter, and the rainbow is only made beautiful by the blending together of many colours, each colour being of distinctive hue.

For those who have failed to conquer the art of true living, there are three ways of bearing the difficulties which beset them:—

- (1) By indifference, which at the moment is too prevalent.
- (2) By philosophy, which is the most ostentatious, or
- (3) By religion, which is the most effectual.

At this point it would be wise for us to recall and remember that all nursing was brought about by religious incentives and that there is no social service to-day which is not religious in origin.

We live in deeds as one great writer has said: "And he most lives who thinks most, feels the noblest and acts the best." In the course of duty, the art of true living is for each one to give sincerely the quality of work which our profession demands, if it is to retain the ideals on which it was founded. Nursing in the truest sense

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