

for a small scale in their own hospitals; it would not be a difficult matter to give a good practical training in the course of one's city or village work, and lectures on hygiene and physiology are as useful to nurses as they would be to these prospective Health Visitors.

THE NURSING SPIRIT.

BY ISABEL MAITLAND STEWART.

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IN this anxious and critical time, when so much depends on our armies and their power not only to hold out but to win a decisive victory in the field, we are constantly debating the question of what after all makes one army superior to another, and what are the essential qualities of a good soldier. Technical skill is of course taken for granted. Intelligence and initiative are beginning to be recognized as fundamental, but the thing which seems to be considered as perhaps the greatest factor in a long drawn-out struggle such as this, is the *morale* of the army, or its spirit. So, when we hear of the still undiminished gaiety and gallantry of the French *poilu* and the rare and sturdy courage and tenacity of our own British Tommies, we take heart again because we know that in spite of the difficulties and delays, the final test will not find them wanting. If armies stand or fall by their *morale*, it is equally true that the soundness and strength of our nursing body will be judged in the last analysis by the quality of its spirit. We do not underestimate the value of technical efficiency, which comes with careful training, nor the vital importance of intelligent and scientific knowledge, but these alone can never make a good nurse, any more than they can make a good soldier or a good artist. Just as there is a special body of knowledge and a special type of skill or technique belonging to every different art and profession, so there is developed a characteristic attitude of mind, a certain way of feeling about one's work, a certain spirit which more or less generally pervades the members of each craft. These attitudes and ideals are the product of environment and training, usually acquired unconsciously, but none the less potent in supplying dominating motives for the control of conduct. In the form of tradition and example they are passed down from generation to generation, becoming embedded in social forms and customs, and being maintained by the forces of law and public opinion. The spirit of the British Navy, for example, is the spirit of a long line of naval leaders and heroes from Drake to Jellicoe and those ideals of courage, tenacity and daring we have come to accept as characteristic of the whole body of naval officers and men.

No one who has watched the effect of training on a body of soldiers or sailors can doubt the profound influence of the spirit which it breeds in them. Besides putting its own stamp on every member of the corps, it binds them

together in sympathy and good-fellowship, it promotes loyalty, obedience and co-operation, it develops a sense of responsibility, trustworthiness and honour, and it supplies motive-power for overcoming often tremendous obstacles and discouragements. Morally it seems to pull up the weaklings and stiffen their fibre, and on the whole to develop a more robust and self-respecting type of character.

Kipling has shown us what it means for a corps to be without such spirit—

“We was rotten 'fore we started—we was never disciplined—
We made it out a favour if an order was obeyed;
Yes, every little drummer 'as 'is rights and wrongs to mind,
So we 'ad to pay for teachin'—an' we paid.”

As nurses, we have always prided ourselves on our professional solidarity, our splendid traditions, and our fine spirit. Certainly no body of men or women can point to a more glorious history. A standard has been created for us which it is not easy to live up to, and so when great crises are to be faced and unusual situations to be met, it is not much marvel that we should all be a little anxious to know how our profession has stood the test. Those who have gone to the firing-line represent the whole body of nurses; where they are strong we should probably be strong, and where they fail we should also fail. So it seems a great opportunity for taking stock and finding out where we stand and how we compare with those splendid nursing ancestors from many lands, who have built up our traditions and given us the vision of the true nursing spirit.

What kind of a spirit is it and how are we to distinguish it from the military spirit, or the spirit of the medical body or any other special group? Fundamentally, the nursing spirit is closely akin to the spirit of the mother, the nursing impulse being rooted in the maternal instinct, which shows itself in the desire to protect, nourish and care for those who are weak and helpless and ailing. Dr. Saleeby calls the nurse the foster-mother of the race, and pictures her as the great conservator of life. This function of conservation is shown most dramatically where we have such a spectacular wasting of life as in the present war. We can almost see the nurse picking up the fragments, hoarding the stores of wasted energy and feeding the flickering flame of life till it glows again. Those who are most violently opposed to war contend that nursing and medical care simply prolong the tragedy by making it possible for more men to be patched up and flung back into the firing line. But where great principles are at stake, and men must be raised up to defend them, the salvage corps contributes more than the recruiting agent, because it economizes the man-power and sensibly increases the total strength of the nation. It has been definitely stated that those nations which have had the service of an ample corps of thoroughly trained nurses have shown a decidedly higher percentage of recoveries and an appreciably shorter average term of convalescence than those who have had to depend on unskilled and undisciplined volunteers. We should be very much surprised and disappointed if such a saving could not be demonstrated by actual statistics, not only because

it would be a needed demonstration of the superior value of expert knowledge and skill, but because it would show that the passion for life-saving which has always been so strong in nurses and particularly in such great leaders as Florence Nightingale, is still as potent as ever.

Like her prototype, the mother, the nurse has also shown herself to be a good fighter, especially where the life or welfare of her charge is menaced. We think at once of the nursing knights of the Crusades, whose function it was not only to comfort and relieve the sick, but also to defend and protect them by force of arms, if necessary. This fighting spirit the nurse shares with the soldier, developing a kind of feminine chivalry which has been wonderfully illustrated in the case of the nurses on a torpedoed transport who refused to accept life-belts from wounded men and insisted on "Tommies First" in spite of the old familiar rule of the sea. Like the soldiers, too, we expect the nurse to show the Spartan spirit, with its contempt for selfish indulgence, its fearlessness in the face of danger, its courage and hardihood and daring. It is good to know that in Serbia and Belgium and wherever men have gone to face death and disease, nurses have gone too, showing the same old hardy adventurous pioneer spirit which has won for them so many laurels in the past. They have stayed at their posts, like good soldiers, and some of them, like Edith Cavell, have met death, but we hear of none who have deserted.

Patriotism is a virtue which, like many of the others mentioned, is not confined to any single group. In the nurse, however, we expect a readier response to the call of duty, a greater willingness to sink her individuality in a common task, a greater steadfastness and trustworthiness in positions of responsibility, than we usually find among amateur volunteers of equal patriotic devotion, but without the long experience of meeting critical situations and the habit of ready obedience and intelligent co-operation. These qualities we draw largely from our soldierly spirit and training.

But we have a great many traditions which come from a very different source. For many centuries the religious orders were almost the sole representatives of the nursing and philanthropic spirit, and the monasteries the only harbours of refuge from the cruelties and turmoils of life. Pre-eminently theirs was the spirit of hospitality, of charity and humanity, which gave assistance, comfort, and nursing care to all who came, regardless of race or color or creed. They ministered to friends and enemies alike, and, though their motive was not entirely free from self-seeking and narrow sectarianism, they showed a spirit of democracy and brotherhood which has been a great inspiration and example to every nurse and social worker. It has been a matter of great pride that, through all the passions and prejudices aroused by the war, nurses and physicians of all nations have been able to maintain so well these traditions of impartial and disinterested service and professional fellowship. It gives us more faith in the final triumph of that world-spirit of internationalism which we all look to see in the future.

There is another tradition which we owe to the religious orders. It is suggested in the name of "Sister", which their members still bear, and which European nurses generally retain, but we discarded, after the secular system

was established. I am glad the name has come back into current use among our nurses, because it serves to emphasize a kind of relationship between the woman-nurse and the man-patient, which is unique and perhaps apt to be overlooked. In older and more barbaric times it was necessary to wrap the nurse round with a special robe of sanctity, and to hedge her about with vows and prohibitions, in order to allow her to carry on her work among men with safety and self-respect. The secular servant nurse of the Gamp type was so glaring an evidence of moral failure that it was necessary to re-establish public confidence and trust in any kind of a secular woman. We owe it to Florence Nightingale and the splendid women who followed her that the idea of sex-adventure and sex-exploitation has so largely been eliminated from the relationship of nurse and patient and that we have so fully demonstrated the superior protection and public respect that comes from the professional and more impersonal type of relationship. This is not incompatible with wholesome good friendship and mutual respect and regard, but it eliminates romantic philandering, discourages the deliberate exploitation of emotions and sensibilities which are not conducive to mental or physical repose and may unfit one to act with decision and good judgment in situations which usually demand the coolest and sanest judgment. No one wishes to deprive a nurse of any of the normal experiences of life, but in her professional capacity she has to consider not only the greatest welfare of her patient and those about her, but the reputation of her profession, which is so easily injured by the thoughtlessness or indiscretion of any of its members. The frivolous and susceptible young amateur nurse, who is too often merely a thinly-disguised matrimonial adventuress, can be more readily forgiven for a lapse of this kind, but it is harder to excuse nurses who have been bred to a sterner and more honourable code. It would be untrue to say that no adverse criticisms of professional nurses have appeared on these or other ethical grounds, but considering the extent to which our members have been placed in the limelight and the difficult situations in which they have been placed, we believe that we will not be ashamed when we compare them with other groups of women and that few of them will fall down below our own best standards.

I might speak of the social or humanitarian spirit which shows itself in constructive, public-spirited effort to improve civic and social conditions, the religious spirit which is marked by a high type of devotion to moral ends and reverence for the deeper and more spiritual things of life, the scientific spirit which is characterised by a spirit of inquiry, a devotion to truth, and a hatred of all forms of superstition, dogmatism and quackery. The nursing spirit has also been influenced to a considerable degree by our contact with medicine, which has always shown a high sense of responsibility towards the public, a fine standard of honor and courage, a spirit of great generosity and tolerance towards human frailties and weaknesses, and a loyalty to colleagues which is rather unique in professional relationships. These ideals nurses also share and aim to realize in their work.

It is too early to say just how the whole record will stand when the war is over and our heroes and heroines return. There will be a great gathering

up of experiences and impressions, and there will be many thrilling stories to tell. But it will be of little profit as far as the profession is concerned unless we are able to sift out all the evidence and find just where we made good and where we have failed most conspicuously—where our training has helped us to meet these new and difficult situations and where it has been weak. If we are only assured that the nursing spirit is still sound and true, we can go forward with confidence to the greater tasks of the future which are clamouring to be done, and to the work of reconstruction in which our profession is certain to have such a conspicuous share.

POEM.

TRAMPS.

See ! the trees on the highway margin
Lift their limbs to the watchful sky.
Still they stand ; and the road runs ever.
Still they stand ; and the tramps go by.

Down the way which the mind has driven
All the wilds of the world between,
Life goes by on her ceaseless journey ;
Steadfast set to an end unseen.

Shameless past and a nameless future,
Tramping, tramping the roads along—
Life, that burns in a vagrant body ;
Life, that goes to a vagrant's song.

Upward thrust from the shades of spirit,
Outward thrust from the womb of things,
Vile and battered, august and holy :
Live invincible, life that sings.

Sings a song of a great becoming,
Sings a song of unceasing strife :
Seething thought and creative passion
Taking form in a vagrant life.

Blindly cutting a path to freedom,
Steadfast set to a shrouded goal ;
Urgent life in a wastrel body,
Ardent life in a wastrel soul.

See ! the trees on the highway margin
Lift their limbs to the watchful sky.
Still they stand ; and the road runs ever.
Still they stand, and the tramps go by.

By EVELYN UNDERHILL.