

## The two following Papers on the Spirit of Nursing were read at the Nurses' Conference. I.

It is rather amazing that in recent years there has been not a little discontent in connection with duty and time off amongst some of our young student nurses, and still more amazing that this discontent should have been made public through the Press. It appears that the trouble has arisen owing to nurses in training having at times been called upon to extend hours of duty and forego days off when their respective hospitals have been pressed by stress of work, sickness amongst the staff, and other unforeseen emergencies. A spirit of this kind is hopelessly incongruous when associated with a profession. If work is to be done and the sick to be nursed, then women who call themselves nurses should willingly answer the call. If not, how can they be regarded as women faithfully serving the sick, loyally supporting their respective hospitals, and upholding the ideals of the profession. It is most disappointing that even a few should take up such an attitude. Indeed it is not the action of women of education studying a profession. Those possessing such a spirit should join the ranks of unskilled labour, for there they would find themselves in the right atmosphere with every opportunity of airing grievances without blotting the ideals of the profession.

During the last few decades nursing has evolved enormously, and the women directly responsible for this great advance are those who have worked long hours, given time graciously, and have never stopped to consider the hours or the days off they have not had. If they had, a great many of our nurses to-day in training would not be surrounded with such comfort, neither would they enjoy such happy and convenient working conditions. It is devoted service and time faithfully given that forces progress. If this progress is to continue, then our students must carry on in the face of seeming adversity with a cheerful and willing spirit, and be proud that by so doing suffering humanity will benefit. Nothing can be said in favour of any nurse who opposes the administration of her school, for while in training she is not qualified, therefore not in the position to criticise. Moreover, she will never join in the

march of progress and success. In short, the profession would be better without her.

Chronic nursing is a subject that is much in need of thought and consideration, for it is rather a regrettable fact that it has been known for nurses to regard this work as something that should not exist. So apparent has the disinterest been that even trained nurses have been known to refuse work of chronic nature. It can only be brought home to those possessing such a spirit if they realise that they themselves may some day be so afflicted. How, then, would they care to be nursed by someone who regarded such work as a trouble? In this particular branch we could well take example from women nursing in the various religious orders, for no doubt very excellent work is done by them. They possess wonderful patience and charm of manner, and are devoted to the work. Moreover, their work is done with a silence that brings rest to the patient.

Quietness is an art that has a tendency to be forgotten—outside interests and pleasures may be responsible with a result that duty suffers, and in consequence many nurses become noisy, hurrying and rather irresponsible young women. In these days it is difficult to hold on to the true nursing spirit as Miss Florence Nightingale meant it to be. Our profession is fast developing along two very definite lines, in that much time is given to encouraging better scientific teaching, and that we have an organised association founded on a very definite business and financial basis. These factors were not prominent 20 years ago, and although they have brought greatly improved conditions and helped tremendously financially, the fact remains that they have to some extent overshadowed the true nursing spirit, or, perhaps it may be said that the combined efforts in support of the nursing spirit have not been so strong as those supporting the financial benefits.

In conclusion, it can only be said that unless students possess a true desire to nurse the sick and loyally serve their schools with a very high sense of duty they will fail in maintaining the ideals as they should stand.