

THE TRAMMELS OF TRADITION

"DON'T be strangled and throttled by tradition!" This startling piece of advice was given last week by Dr. H. L. Eason, vice-chancellor of the University of London, on the occasion of the presentation of certificates by the Duchess of Kent, at Bedford College, to the students of the Florence Nightingale International Foundation. We can imagine circles where such a message will hardly find favour. Yet a voice crying in the wilderness should never be ignored by the wise, for the apostasy of to-day may always become the orthodoxy of to-morrow. Is it true that nursing is so hampered by a too-slavish obedience to the methods of the past? Are our nursing rules too stereotyped, our discipline too rigid to be in keeping with an elastic and democratic age? Is there a tendency to turn down reforms merely because they are reforms and without proper regard to their merits? Nurses can answer these questions, and we should welcome our readers' views.

The work of nursing is done upon the most precious of materials, human life and health. Experiment is therefore rightly regarded as dangerous, since the penalties of failure may be so grave. But

this is no excuse for banning all changes. On the contrary, it imposes a duty of constant vigilance, since every change that is a real improvement brings benefits as precious as a bad change can be disastrous. Perhaps the strangest fact about tradition in any profession is that it is apt to centre round individual figures who departed most violently from the traditions of their own time. The tradition of Florence Nightingale in our profession, to take one example, finds its counterpart in the tradition of following in Nelson's footsteps in the Navy. Yet both were violent revolutionaries; both broke away from the traditions of their own age; and both, we may suspect, would prove equally turbulent if their unruly spirits were with us once more.

In the latest issue of the "Sunday Express" Mr. James Douglas writes refreshingly of the Bearskin mind. Taking as his text the antiquated helmets of our troops, he declares that we have Bearskin laws, a Bearskin Parliament, and Bearskin institutions generally. Is it not possible that, on looking round, he might also discover the Bearskin matron, the Bearskin hospital, the Bearskin council, and the Bearskin nurse?

Nursing Mirror.
4.7.36

"LADY OF THE LASH"

A young woman from the Phillipine Islands, Miss Irene M. Abelgas, speaking broken English, proposed a vote of thanks to the Duchess of Kent yesterday, when, at the Bedford College for Women, Regent's Park, the Duchess presented the certificates of the Florence Nightingale International Foundation to 18 students, representing 11 countries, who had completed the international course.

Dr. H. L. Eason, Vice-Chancellor of London University, said that an old friend of Florence Nightingale who was present had reminded him that, although Florence Nightingale was the "Lady of the Lamp," she was the lady of the lash. If she could come into the room that afternoon, she would lash them as unsparingly as she lashed conditions that obtained in the Crimea.

Morning Post.
27.6.36.

*Duchess of Kent's visit.
June 26, 1936.*