

The Royal British Nurses' Association.

FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF A
HOSPITAL MANAGER.



IN the course of the past two or three years it has repeatedly happened that I have been asked whether I approved of, and sympathised with, the object and aims of the British Nurses' Association. Invariably, my answer has been in the affirmative, for reasons which commended themselves to my judgment. What those reasons were I am now happy to be able to state in the *NURSING RECORD*, in response to a request from the Editor.

First of all, it seemed to me that the circumstances demanded, and the time was ripe for, the organization of Nursing as a recognized profession; and I was glad to find that the Association, from the outset of its formation, was directing its chief energies to that end. That that was a worthy object, and a most necessary one in the interest alike of Nurses and the public, I do not hesitate to assert.

So few years ago, as to be well within my personal experience, it was generally considered, even by persons in daily contact with disease and suffering, that ability to nurse the sick required no special knowledge; that it was, indeed, the natural attribute and grace of almost every woman. Today, happily, it is universally allowed that, to woman's appropriate qualities of gentleness and tenderness, there must be superadded careful training, with no small amount of technical knowledge and skill, in anyone aspiring to thorough efficiency as a Nurse. And no one acquainted with the details of a Nurse's life will think of denying that this requisite knowledge and skill can be acquired only by much study, by close observation, by cheerful submission to discipline, and by unremitting attention to duties, many of which call for no mean order of intelligence. Is it to be wondered at, or, rather, was it not naturally to be expected, that those who had submitted themselves to this training, and, by several years' devotion to a most honourable and unselfish vocation, had perfected themselves in an art which is often as potent for good as the science and skill of the physician and surgeon, should have desired to be regarded no longer merely as individuals practising a particular calling, but as members of a profession duly and properly organized? The inception of the British Nurses' Association was the outcome of this natural and most praiseworthy desire; and Her Majesty's gracious grant to the Association of

a Royal Charter cannot but be regarded, in effect, as the founding of the profession.

With an intimate experience of hospital work extending over many years, during which time it has been my privilege to endeavour to show how opportunities could be provided for the training of Nurses, and how the transition from the old order of things to the new could be rendered easy, I feel bound to express my opinion that, not only Nurses themselves, but also all those to whom the care or treatment of the sick—rich or poor—is entrusted, are much to be congratulated on this well-deserved recognition of the profession of Nursing. *Esprit de corps* never fails to produce valuable results; and I anticipate that, amongst Nurses, the consciousness that they are members of a corporate body will have an elevating and inspiring influence.

Next in importance to the institution of the profession—indeed, as a fundamental part of the Association's operations—I regard the publication of a Register of Nurses, who, in the opinion of the governing body of the Association—henceforth the representative of the Nursing profession—have received such adequate training as to entitle them to be considered fully competent for the exercise of their calling. It has been wisely determined that no training can be called adequate that has extended over a less period than three years; and, further, that registration will not be allowed except upon the production of satisfactory evidence of character and conduct. Every Nurse able to comply with these conditions (and, surely, none who cannot do so ought now-a-days to be considered trained or competent) will, in course of time, I think, be allured to the Register. It is not to be concealed, however, that many Nurses possessing the requisite qualifications withhold themselves from the Association, and at present evince no disposition to place their names on the Register. This abstention is, of course, greatly to be regretted; but whilst, no doubt, it is in large measure attributable to honest difference of opinion as to the policy of the Association, and as to the advisability of the formation of a general Register, it is, unfortunately, but too notorious that it is to some extent due to personal jealousies and dislikes. But I feel convinced that these causes will, before long, cease to operate, and that, ultimately, the Register will contain the names of all duly qualified and properly certificated members of the Nursing profession. Such a Register will be far-reaching in its consequences. By the reliable information it gives of the names and places of training of the duly qualified, it cannot fail to be of advantage to medical practitioners and to the public. It will also be a protection to those Nurses who have mastered their art at the cost of great labour and self-sacrifice, but who have often found themselves subjected to the competition of untrained and unskilful rivals.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)