

Last Words for 1897.

THE present year has been one in which there have been many disappointments and discouragements for those nurses who have the welfare of their profession at heart. We, therefore, desire to remind them that they must not lose heart in their efforts to obtain professional status, and professional advancement, for the battle which will have to be fought before they gain the day has only just begun.

History repeats itself, and the Nursing Profession is now passing through the sifting process which invariably takes place, in all societies, before they are established on a sure basis, and is rallying its forces for the work which lies before it.

The Royal British Nurses' Association has at least served to show us where our strength, and where our weakness, lies. The defects in the constitution, and the manner in which the management of the Nurses' Association has been taken out of the hands of the nurses themselves, is a lesson of what to avoid in future organization, which the most long-suffering amongst us cannot fail to take to heart. We have learnt also much with regard to those who can be relied upon to further the ends for which we associated ourselves; and we are glad to know that many influential matrons of provincial and Irish hospitals, at the greatest inconvenience to themselves, attended last week's meeting to record

their votes against the proposed new Bye-Laws. We believe, therefore, that these matrons will return to their posts deeply impressed with the necessity for co-operation outside an Association where such scenes are possible as occurred at last week's meeting, when both influential medical men and matrons were hooted and hissed, and when the only nurse members who attempted to raise their voices on behalf of their professional liberties were insulted in like manner. There can be no doubt therefore, that upon the decision of the Privy Council with regard to the Bye-Laws being announced, a nucleus of influential and determined women will, if necessary, be found ready to band themselves together to obtain the legal status for nurses, which the Royal British Nurses' Association was formed to obtain, but which object, owing to malice without the Association, and treachery within, it has foresworn. The watchword of these women will be "liberty of conscience, liberty of speech, and professional progress," and their goal, State registration by Act of Parliament. We have been deprived for the present, at the instigation of the Hon. Officers, of the privileges won for us by the devoted work of women within the Association, but we are hopeful that the conscientious minority, steadfast and true to the principles upon which that Association was founded, will now combine outside it, and will eventually obtain the legal status for which they originally associated themselves together.

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