

The Present Position of Nursing in the United Kingdom.

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UNFORTUNATELY, the granting of a Royal Charter to the Royal British Nurses' Association aroused opposition to the cause of Nursing reform from a new and unexpected quarter. Previously, the movement had been openly opposed, could therefore be openly met, and was publicly defeated. But, as soon as the Association became recognized by the State and a body of public importance, a few medical men realized the probable advantages to themselves of taking a prominent part in its management.

By tactics which have been fully exposed again and again in the Press, and which it is not needful to recapitulate on the present occasion, a few medical men succeeded in ousting the nurse founders of the Association, and its chief workers off its Executive Committee; and, by a combination of terrorism and toadyism, obtained the support of a sufficient number of private nurses, and those who were serving in the institutions with which they were connected, to enable them to alter the Bye-laws and thus to secure in their own hands the entire management of the Association.

The affairs of the Association have since been most gravely mismanaged, as might have been expected. The leading Matrons of the kingdom have refused to take any part in its work.

A public meeting has already demanded an Inquiry into the present management of the Association, but this, of course, has been, and will be, strenuously resisted by those whose conduct would then be inquired into—a fact to which the public are attributing the proper significance.

A large number of members of Parliament, however, have been already interested in the matter, and, in due course, a Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry into the Nursing Question will doubtless be obtained. Then, it may confidently be expected that the nurses will once more obtain the management of their own affairs; and that the Association may become—as the Privy Council intended that it should be—a means of great benefit to the public and to the nursing profession.

Meantime, the foundation of the Royal British Nurses' Association in 1887, gave rise to two great movements which have since progressed in the most remarkable manner. The first of these arose from the decision of the Association that three years regular hos-

pital training was the minimum standard of nursing education. At that time, very few hospitals trained for more than one or two years; but the principle has gradually been accepted not only by a Select Committee of the House of Lords, which pronounced definitely in its favour, but, also by the great majority of hospital authorities. So that, at the present day, nearly every important hospital in the Kingdom has adopted the three years' standard, and hardly any, except very small institutions, still retain the two years' term.

Coincident with this, the methods of training have been more systematised and the curriculum greatly extended; so that although much remains to be done, and although, probably, no uniform system of nursing education will be adopted until Parliament deals with the matter, the advances which have been made during the past twelve years, are, in the highest degree, encouraging, and fully compensate those who initiated the movement for the vituperation and opposition to which they have personally been exposed.

Still more encouraging and satisfactory has been the development of Co-operation amongst nurses. Twelve years ago, nurses were universally overworked and underpaid. Commercial institutions sweated them, and, in too many instances, when a nurse was worn out with her laborious duties and past all further work, her only refuge was the Workhouse.

Now Co-operations exist in London and many other large cities, which not only protect the public against inefficient workers, but also secure for trained nurses their full earnings less a small commission required for working expenses.

The present position of nursing in the United Kingdom then is one of steady advancement and progress, and THE NURSING RECORD can claim that, during the past eleven years, it has—often single-handed—taken an active part in the promotion of reforms, and in the exposure of nursing abuses.

The NURSING RECORD is well satisfied, therefore, to know that, week by week, it is welcomed in every part of the world; and that it possesses readers in all classes, both at home and abroad; so that, by spreading throughout the world the news of what has been, and is being, done in England, Nursing reformers in other countries have not only been encouraged to commence similar work, but have also been enabled to avoid many of the mistakes and difficulties which have occurred in the United Kingdom.

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