

# THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED  
**THE NURSING RECORD**  
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 930.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 27, 1906.

Vol. XXXVI.

## Editorial.

### THE DUTY OF THE MATRONS.

We have always insisted upon the responsibility of Matrons, as the natural leaders of the nursing profession, to safeguard the interests of nurses, and to guide nursing opinion, and we congratulate the little band of Matrons present at the recent meeting of the Royal British Nurses' Association on their action on that occasion. We believe we are right in saying that every one of them voted in favour of Miss Forrest's amendment to reinstate the seven direct representatives of the nurses on the Governing Body, instead of sanctioning the provision of *one* direct representative, suggested by the Executive Committee as making adequate provision for the representation of at least, 80,000 nurses in the United Kingdom.

Nurses, as is fitting, naturally look to the Matrons as their leaders in professional matters, and, indeed, both in this country and in America some of them are entitled to much gratitude for the work which they have accomplished for the welfare of the profession at large in the last ten years.

Now a word to the Matrons.

Within the last twelve months two determined attacks have been made to grasp power to govern trained nurses who form a body composed of thousands of working women *by organising governing bodies to control them.*

The first attempt was that known as the Board of Trade Scheme, organised by Sir Henry Burdett and the officials of Guy's Hospital, and the second was made by the Executive Committee of the Royal British Nurses' Association in re-drafting its Registration Bill, which, as presented to the

members, practically disfranchised the Trained Nurses of the United Kingdom.

In the first instance, a Society composed of laymen was to nominate a Governing Body on which there was not *one* direct representative of the 80,000 nurses, and, in the second instance, the Executive Committee of the Royal British Nurses' Association, under the specious plea of conforming to the recommendations of the Select Committee of the House of Commons swept away six of the seven direct representatives of the nurses from their own Governing Body, at the same time increasing the nominated medical members from three to six.

In both instances the motive in forming these autocratic Governing Bodies of persons who are the employers of Trained Nurses is perfectly apparent. It is an attempt to submerge the interests of the whole body of workers, and to place them under a dictatorship of those who employ them. These attempts to filch from trained nurses a justifiable degree of self-government and personal responsibility are as indefensible in principle as they are injurious in practice, and are a gross injustice to which nurses will never submit.

What is the duty of the Matrons of our Training Schools in this crisis in the history of the profession of which they are members, though perhaps not poor and dependent ones.

Their duty is quite plain, and those who hesitate to assume it cannot be considered worthy of the honourable and responsible positions which they hold.

Matrons are nurses or they are nothing, and we say unhesitatingly that every ounce of influence which they can bring to bear to place the profession of nursing on a

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)