

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

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

No. 963.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1906.

Vol. XXXVII

Editorial.

VOLUNTARY VERSUS STATE ASSOCIATIONS OF NURSES.

The Royal Victorian Trained Nurses' Association, at its annual meeting, considered how to deal with members of the Association who have not paid their annual subscription for years, and who decline to do so while still claiming the advantages of membership. We have no sympathy with the position of these members (one, for instance, made one payment of 10s. 6d., and "meant to have £5 from the sick fund"), and the obvious thing to do seems to be to remove the defaulters from the Roll of members. We gather, however, from the official organ of the Association that this proceeding is not so simple as it appears, as the "unfinancial members" have taken legal advice as to how to continue membership while refusing to pay. The Council of the Association intends to render this anomalous condition of things impossible in the future by framing a new by-law empowering it to deal with members who do not pay their annual subscription before a given date. Meanwhile, acting on the advice of its Hon. Solicitor, the Council proposes to deal with the present delinquents, under Rule 24, "on the ground that non-payment of a subscription, whilst still posing as a member is sufficient reason for the opinion that the member has proved herself unfit to remain a member, and therefore for removing her name from the Register, and for expelling her from the Association."

This raises very serious points, because the Royal Victorian Trained Nurses' Association has established what has been termed by Sir Victor Horsley, "a corner in nursing" in that Colony, and to expel

nurses from its ranks will undoubtedly involve the infliction of professional damage upon them.

In our view, Miss M. D. Farquharson sums up the position admirably when she says "not being either registered or recognised by the State I do not see why if a nurse continues non-payment, which shows her desire to discontinue her membership, her name should not be removed from the Roll. That is quite a different matter from being expelled. One I look on as a formal business matter, but expulsion should only be for something quite different from non-payment of a fee."

This is precisely the point, and if the Association is satisfied that this deletion cannot be carried out till a new by-law authorising it has been framed, then the Council had much better suffer the defaulters to remain on the Roll until that by-law can come into force. But the whole thing points to what experience has proved elsewhere, that the control of a profession such as nursing involves such far-reaching issues, not only professional but economic and industrial, that no voluntary association should undertake them. Nurses should claim the right to have their profession organised on the same basis as men claim for their callings, namely, that they shall be organised and controlled by the State. The Royal Victorian Trained Nurses' Association has done admirable work in the past, its record is one of almost phenomenal success, but it will now be acting in its own best interests if it realises that the time has come to put a limit to voluntary control, and bends its energies to securing in conjunction, with other States, the passage of an Act by the Federal Parliament placing nursing in the position of a legalised profession throughout Federated Australia.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)