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Editorial.

OUR PLAIN DUTY.

On Wednesday next the Official Directory of Nurses Bill, introduced into the House of Lords by Lord Balfour of Burleigh, is down for its second reading.

We have on previous occasions drawn attention to the dangers of this Bill, how, under its provisions, the nursing profession would be deprived of all voice in the making of laws, which they would be compelled to obey, of all power of defining nursing standards, and of taking their proper share in the control of their profession. We do not at the present time propose to elaborate these points further, but rather to emphasise the duty of the moment for all matrons and nurses.

The position which nurses have won in the community is one of honour and importance. As a matter of course, their services are requisitioned in any serious case, and they are indispensable to the surgeon and physician. This position they have won by the conscientious work which has impressed not only those who for twenty years have been striving to demonstrate their right to legal status, but even the opponents of this measure of justice have stated that they "recognise as legitimate the desire that there should be a record of the experience of nurses available," a concession grudgingly made after a Select Committee of the House of Commons had, in 1896, unanimously pronounced in favour of the Registration of Trained Nurses by a Central Body appointed by the State.

We have now come to a plain issue demonstrated by the Bills before Parliament. There is one Bill before the House of Commons under which nurses would have a just voice in the management of their profession, there is another before the

House of Lords under which they would be deprived of all power in the management of their profession.

That legislation for the organisation of nursing cannot be long delayed is certain, and the duty of every Matron, Sister, and Nurse is to strive that when legislation does take place it shall be enacted on lines which will ensure, for the safety of the sick, the greatest professional efficiency in nurses. Everyone must do her part at this crisis, and a special responsibility devolves upon the Matrons to whom naturally the public looks for guidance in such a matter. It is impossible any longer to maintain a neutral attitude on the question. Two positions are possible; to come forward and help to secure wise legislation, or to neglect this plain duty. There is no middle course, for it is impossible to escape responsibility.

To every generation some special duty is assigned. To a former one belonged the onerous task of raising nursing from the position of dishonour to which it had sunk and gaining for the work of trained nurses honour and respect. On the present generation devolves the task of placing that work on a permanent basis, of defining the standard by which the efficiency of a trained nurse shall be tested, and of gaining for nurses their professional enfranchisement.

It is an honourable if difficult task which has fallen to our share, and it behoves every trained nurse to do her duty at this crisis, not to allow herself to be influenced by motives of self-interest, apathy or cowardice, but to prove to those who succeed her that accepting her responsibility she consistently strove in her generation to secure good nursing to the sick through wise consolidation and organisation of the profession to which she belongs.

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