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EDITORIAL.

THE NEW YEAR.

It is always a relief to turn the last page of the old year, and face the unknown possibilities of the future. It is, however, with a feeling of serious responsibility that trained nurses will, in the United Kingdom, enter upon the New Year. They realize that all is not well with their profession, and that therefore the best interests of the sick are not safeguarded. They realize, too, that the troubles of which they are aware can be rectified, but that the authority at present given to their profession is in no way equal to the responsibilities placed upon it.

Take, for instance, the question of the nursing of sick and wounded sailors and soldiers, for the efficiency of which every trained nurse feels a personal responsibility, and would willingly do her share to ensure.

Nothing has proved more surely the light estimation in which the skill of trained nurses, gained only after an arduous apprenticeship, is held by the public than the way in which, on the declaration of war, women of all ranks hastened to assume our uniform, to besiege Matrons of hospitals for a few weeks' insight into the details of our work—most unwisely, in our opinion, granted them, in most instances—and then, in any position, from that of Matron of a Military Auxiliary Hospital downwards, but at the front for choice, assumed responsible care of the sick and wounded. Had they had the least conception of what is involved in work which taxes all the resources of the trained nurse if it is to be adequately done they could never for a moment have thrust their ignorant attentions upon our sick soldiers.

This is only one of the many instances, though, at the present time, the most flagrant, in which the sick suffer from the disorganization of the nursing profession. With efficient organization, with the right

to establish educational standards, and enforce discipline, and with the recognition by Parliament of the work of nurses as that of a skilled profession, many of the evils of which they now complain would disappear automatically.

Further, their economic position would, for the first time be placed on a sound footing. At present trained and untrained compete on equal terms in the open market, and employment is by no means always given to the most competent, often to the most audacious.

Therefore, in the New Year, with greater earnestness than ever before, we must strive to secure from Parliament rightful recognition.

That the majority of the House of Commons is in favour of nursing reform we know well. They proved it unmistakably by their overwhelming vote in its favour on March 3rd last, and by the unanimous report of the Select Committee on Nurses' Registration in 1905. That the House of Lords approves the principle of Registration of Nurses by the State we also know. It proved it by passing Lord Ampthill's Bill in 1908.

That organized medical practitioners strongly support the principle of nurses' registration has been proved by the resolutions passed at Annual Representative Meetings of the British Medical Association.

That the organized nurses of the world support this principle, is proved by their having secured Registration Acts from 48 legislatures.

That the public would welcome a guarantee that nurses were available whose qualifications have been tested by a Central Authority is also certain.

What, therefore, we have to do in the immediate future is to convince Parliament that the will of majority must prevail, and a small faction be no longer permitted to obstruct urgent reform.

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