

Until this year, as we all know, there was not the slightest bond of unity among Nurses. Each was a scattered unit, standing alone, and unable, in the vast majority of cases, even to help herself in time of adversity, much less to help her colleagues. And yet, surely, if any body of people ever required cohesion it was the workers in this one great department of the army which has to wage a never-ending pitiless contest with disease and death. Surely all the experience of daily life proves that the great fight could be waged better, more easily, and more successfully, if the battalions engaged in it were firmly welded together and organised, than if each single soldier stood alone and fought only for his own hand. Surely all experience shows that it is better for everyone to be supported and strengthened by wise confederacy with others. The advantages of Union in everything have been preached in fable and in song from the earliest dawn of history ; it has been proved again and again in our own time, and yet it is only within the last twelve months that Nurses have had the opportunity given to them of uniting together, and with their leaders—the members of the Medical profession. It is actually only within the last year that the soldiers of all grades in this great army have had the opportunity of becoming organised into one corporate body. But that has now come to pass. In February last there was formally initiated the new movement.

The British Nurses' Association was formed with the advice and assistance of the leading Physicians and Surgeons of the Empire, and under the Presidency of Her Royal Highness Princess Christian, whose knowledge of, and extreme interest in, all Nursing matters is so well known. And now Nurses, at last, have the opportunity they have never previously possessed, and this Christmastide they can show their goodwill to all their co-workers as they could never have done before, by enrolling themselves as members of their own Association, formed to assist Nurses by that great strength which is born of Union.

Last year it would have been an empty mockery to have told Nurses it was their bounden duty, not only to show goodwill towards their patients, but also to the whole body of their fellow-workers. To-day, it is absolutely easy of fulfilment. I am glad to believe that it is a duty which more than one hundred Nurses are, at present, recognising every week, because in the last month four hundred and fifty have joined the Association. It has been said that this is a measure of success so utterly unprecedented in the history of professional Associations, that there is no necessity to urge Nurses to become members ; that they will join, if they can, merely because they find all their leaders are doing so. And though the argument

is plausible, so far as the Association itself is concerned, it does not touch the ground upon which the present contention is based ; that it is the duty of each and every Nurse who is eligible, for the sake of others, to make application for membership.

The Association has only been in existence ten months, but in that short time, nearly eighteen hundred members have been enrolled, and in addition to these, strong Branches are being organised in the Colonies of the Empire, so that British Nurses all over the world are now firmly united with definite objects, and with the strength necessary for their fulfilment. The Association, it has been often told, proposes to seek for a Royal Charter, legalising the Registration of only those women who can show that they possess the necessary training and experience to enable them to tend the sick efficiently. How valuable this will be to Nursing and to Nurses has been well shown in the pages of the *Nursing Record* and the *Lancet*. But to prove my present point, I would only remind Nurses that if they join the Association and thereby help it to gain this Charter, they will be assisting in the removal of the extremely unfair competition to which Private Nurses, who are thoroughly well trained, are now subjected at the hands of hundreds of ignorant and unskilled women, who at present, without let or hindrance, prey upon the public and cause incalculable harm and suffering to the sick.

There is no necessity to detail the many benevolent schemes already sanctioned, or under consideration, by which the Association hopes to benefit Members individually. Enough has probably been said to prove that even at this early period of its existence the British Nurses' Association is powerful, successful, and able to assist its Members, and also that it behoves all Nurses who work so hard for the general public, to come forward and join it, in order to show their desire to help the Members of their own profession.

I come, therefore, to my next argument—the chance now offered to Nurses of assisting women engaged in every other trade or occupation. It is generally recognised that women's work in many ways is quite equal to that performed by men. But it rarely represents the same commercial value, probably for one great reason. Male operatives in nearly every department have combined, and so by the strength of their unity largely control the market price of their labour. Women hitherto have only in the rarest instances joined together for the like purposes, and with very slight results, perhaps because of the want of education of the sex generally upon business matters. But if the Nurses' Association becomes a great recognised success, there is no doubt that

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