

members of a definite profession, recognised by the State, and properly controlled and organised.

This being granted, we would ask Nurses to remember what was the condition of affairs in the Nursing world only twenty years ago. Trained Nursing was then literally in its infancy. There were very few training schools in the whole of the United Kingdom. There were very few trained Nurses; and the heads of most of the largest hospitals in the kingdom were ladies entirely ignorant of Nursing details, and chosen for their position by reason of their abilities as housekeepers. There was literally no Nursing profession then. The Nurse who had been in Hospital service, and who in the great majority of instances was but imperfectly educated, deemed herself fortunate if she could obtain admission to a Private Nursing Institution and receive £25 per annum, being paid and treated by her employers as they paid and treated the domestic servants of the Home. Perhaps these facts may surprise some of our younger readers. But they may say that, in these times, twenty years ago is ancient history. Let us come, then, to the state of affairs only ten years ago. There had been, by then, a great influx of educated gentlewomen into the Nursing world. Many Hospitals had commenced to train all their workers on definite lines. Most of the Matrons of the large Hospitals were women who had been efficiently trained in the details of Nursing, and who were therefore able to superintend their subordinates. But even then, only ten years ago, there was no recognised Nursing profession, and a well-known provincial surgeon publicly ridiculed the term as an absurdity. The value of Nurses was better recognised, and in consequence Institutions which farmed out Nurses were able to raise their fees from one guinea, which had previously been customary, to a guinea and a half, per week. But just as there was no union amongst Nurses, so there was even then no independence. Private Nurses were practically compelled to belong to Institutions conducted for the sole profit of their proprietors, and considered themselves fortunate if they received the wages of a housemaid, with the certainty that as soon as the Institution considered them to be past work they would be summarily dismissed.

Such was the state of affairs only eight years ago, when the great movement began which has resulted in the formation of the State-recognised Nursing profession of to-day, with all the great and material benefits which have arisen from that fact. To-day, Nursing stands pre-eminent as the only occupation followed by women, the representatives of which have been incorporated by Royal Charter. The con-

sequence has been that all Nurses, even if they have not attained to the honour of membership of their Chartered Corporation, are now regarded by the public with a totally different measure of respect and appreciation from that in which they were held, as we have shown, only a brief decade ago.

Nurses are able now to join together, not only for mutual assistance and support, but for the practical management and control of their own profession. Without the work done by the Royal British Nurses' Association, in the face of the most bitter and powerful opposition, the existence, for example, of the Registered Nurses' Society, and of other Nursing Co-operations, would never have been possible, and probably would never have been attempted. The material benefits for individual Nurses which have thus been secured, have been attained solely through the establishment of the Nursing profession on a strong and legal basis; and probably there are few Nurses in the United Kingdom who are not sharing in the advantages of the position which has been gained for them by the self-denying exertions and strenuous labour of comparatively few of their co-workers. There is probably not one trained Nurse who would consent, if she had the option of accepting, that she and her fellow-workers should be degraded to the position which their predecessors held only ten years ago. But it is of grave importance to every one of them that they should clearly understand how this great progress has been made, and how their present position might be endangered or altogether deteriorated. And this, we shall endeavour to show next week.

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#### INFLUENZA AGAIN.

THERE is little doubt that London is again suffering from a very severe epidemic of so-called influenza, and which has now evidently become an annual visitor. Many of our public men are prostrated by it, and from all sides one hears of more or less severe cases. The consequence has been that there has been an extraordinary demand for Nurses, and that the large Institutions have been besieged with applicants for trained Nurses. One gentleman who applied this week to an Institution for a Nurse, was extremely indignant when he was told that every member of the staff was already engaged, and demanded to know what use Nursing Institutions were "if they did not keep Nurses always ready for urgent cases." It is of course only a repetition of the previous experience during epidemics, and the paucity of Nurses for such a great emergency is rather a satisfactory fact than otherwise—from the Nurses' point of view—because if there were sufficient Nurses to meet this great and temporary demand it would inevitably mean that in times of ordinary sickness large numbers of them would be always out of employment.

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