

which we have drawn attention, that the time has now arrived when it is expedient that an Act of Parliament should as soon as possible be passed, providing for the registration and education of medical, surgical, and obstetric Nurses. Were any further proof necessary it would be afforded by a Resolution which we are informed was passed by the Council of the Incorporated Medical Practitioners' Association on August 1st, and which, while expressing the cordial sympathy and concurrence of that important body with the Resolution passed at the General Meeting of the British Medical Association, carried the matter a stage further into the region of practical politics by instructing the Executive Committee to draft out the principles upon which legislation for Nurses should be based, and to bring these before the members of the Incorporated Association during the coming autumn, for their consideration.

Events are moving rapidly forward when the two representative medical Associations both take active measures in favour of Nursing legislation, in the course of one week. At any rate, the importance of these pronouncements by such influential and representative medical bodies can hardly be over-estimated. It may, therefore, we believe, be regarded as certain that within a limited period of time, some measure dealing with the matter will be introduced to the notice of Parliament. Let us see first what support it would receive.

The medical profession, as we have shown, may be regarded as practically unanimous concerning the necessity for such legislation. It only requires that the public shall be informed of the urgent need for the protection of the sick in order to enlist their active support and co-operation.

But the question will then arise as to the attitude of the Nursing profession toward such an Act. In the first place, the wishes and views of the Royal British Nurses' Association are beyond all question, because not only have the leaders of that body expressed their desire for legislation on sundry occasions and in unmistakable language, but, as we have already shown, it is the real and ultimate end towards which the voluntary system of registration which they have inaugurated has always tended.

Outside the Association, there is also a considerable section of independent Nurses who would welcome legislation, and have always looked forward to such a consummation. Many of these have often and openly said that they could not recognise the utility of the preliminary and voluntary scheme of registration initiated by the Association. Beyond these active and passive supporters of legislation, there

are perhaps but few Nurses who would be prepared to take any part in opposing the State recognition of their profession, and its control and discipline under Parliamentary powers. There is one section only whose action may be supposed to remain in any doubt upon this matter. In the face of what transpired when the Royal British Nurses' Association sought for its Royal Charter, it has been said that a certain number of hospital authorities might consider themselves called upon to oppose any legislation for Nurses. But after the strong opinions expressed by the powerful and representative medical bodies which we have quoted, and in view also of the widespread feeling in favour of a Nursing Act amongst the Nursing profession, and of the obvious advantages of such legislation to the public at large, it is possible that hospital authorities would not take a very active attitude of opposition in this matter. We know indeed that some of them, who opposed a small Association obtaining any State recognition, could not, by the very arguments they then employed, object to the intervention of the Legislature in this matter. There can be no doubt that in the drafting of such a Nursing Act as is necessary the opinions of the lay authorities of the chief hospitals must be given due and sufficient weight, and we trust therefore that whichever body undertakes the duty of drafting such a Bill will adopt also the necessary measures for obtaining the opinions of the leading hospital authorities upon the details of the measure before it is presented to the notice of Parliament. It is for the benefit of everyone that whatever Act is passed should be efficacious. The assistance of everyone qualified to express an opinion should be sought, and we trust will be heartily given. It is generally admitted now that a Nursing Act is certain to be passed. We earnestly hope that all differences of opinion will be buried, and only the broad public and professional benefits of such a measure will be considered in the settlement of its details.

PRACTICAL SYMPATHY.

SMALL-POX patients undoubtedly arouse public sympathy, but it is sympathy which is expressed rather distantly and from afar off. At Ripley, where there have been a good many cases, the Medical Officer of Health has taken practical steps towards arousing interest in the isolated and somewhat dreary condition of his patients established in hospital tents. He says, "Only those who have passed through the ordeal know the value of the little things which go to make up for the 'boycotting' which small-pox patients undergo." To relieve the monotony of their many days in quarantine Dr. Gaylor made an appeal, which was promptly responded to by the public, for illustrated papers and flowers.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)