

who undertake their training to see that the public receives that which it requires—that for which it pays its money.

The trained Nurse who is, or should be, and in the future always will be, the veritable assistant of the medical man or woman, has come to stay. She is the logical outcome of the higher position now claimed by medical science and the medical profession, the medical man is no longer a barber surgeon or an apothecary, and the Nurse who assists him can never again be a woman who undertakes Hospital and private Nursing in the intervals of charring.

Of the willingness of the public to accept the trained Nurse and of the doctors to avail themselves of her services there is little doubt, whilst as to the popularity of the profession amongst women there can be none whatever—judging by the very large number of applications for vacancies as Probationers received by the Superintendent of every Training School in England.

But until 1887 there was no idea of any general organisation of Nurses as professional women—of any uniformity in training—of any generally accepted standard of proficiency. Each Hospital trained according to the whim of its management, and the curriculum varied from an excellent and carefully considered course of training to an absolute lack of system that simply turned out conceited ward drudges. But all equally claimed to have trained their Probationers whether they had really been subjected to a systematic course of two or three years' instruction, or had simply been turned loose in the wards for a year to gather knowledge as best she could. When the Nurse had once left her Hospital she was responsible to no one for her professional conduct; no one dreamt of a recognised status for her, of protection for her in her professional capacity against those who without right usurped the title and position of a trained Nurse, or of means by which the great body of Nurses could purge themselves of members who had proved professionally unworthy. "Training" having once been recognised as a necessity for sick Nurses, by the overwhelming voice of public opinion, each Hospital became a Training School on its own lines, jealously guarding itself from outside influence, and never dreaming of a broader co-operation that should make all Nurses members of one great profession for mutual advancement and mutual help.

The Royal British Nurses' Association was founded to meet—as far as might be—this want. Its founders were actuated by a sincere desire to form an association on a strictly professional basis, that should have for its object—not benevolent schemes—but a far-reaching educational and organising policy. It was to define the training of sick Nurses—the minimum length of

their apprenticeship, to register those whose qualifications entitled them to registration, to unite them for mutual professional help and protection, to found a central court of appeal in professional matters, in short organise the profession of Nursing—that that body was founded.

I well remember the first meeting, when the first crude idea was, that trained Nurses should unite amongst themselves and obtain a legal status for their profession. For English people, like all Anglo-Saxon races, are a law-abiding race—and their first idea in starting a new life, a new organisation, or even a new game, is always to legalise its existence. Like all young organisations, the Royal British Nurses' Association met with stormy times, tempests without and within, strenuous opposition from vested interests and treachery in the camp. It has made initial mistakes, and repented them in dust and ashes; but it stirred questions that will not rest again till they are answered, it initiated a vigorous separate life for the Nursing profession, and whatever may be the fate of the Royal British Nurses' Association, Nurses will have only themselves to blame if they drift back to their old attitude of isolation and indifference, neglecting the great power that lies for them in organisation and combination. It is impossible to deny that Nursing as an organised profession has reached a very critical point in its career in England; in fact, Nursing politics have passed through as breezy a period as South African affairs lately, and much depends upon the next few years to decide the lines upon which it will develop in the future.

The professional duty of a Nurse can be as clearly defined as that of a medical man or woman.

The Nurse's first duty in her work is to act as the skilled assistant of medicine and surgery, to obey implicitly the orders of the medical man with regard to the patient under his charge, and to carry out those orders in the most considerate, careful and decent manner possible; to place in all things the welfare of the patients committed to her care above her own; to omit to do nothing, consistent with the medical man's orders, to favour their recovery; to respect all confidences that are made to her in her professional capacity either in Hospital or private work, and in all things to act honourably and conscientiously in the discharge of her professional duties; but she must not forget the duty she owes to herself and her fellow-workers as members of a great professional body.

There is a great future before the Nursing profession if it remains true to its principles, and whilst acknowledging the paramount authority of medicine and surgery in all matters relating to treatment and medical affairs—does

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