

## Nursing Politics.

### THE ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' "KICK UP."

WE are glad to find that many members of the medical profession are entirely in sympathy with our opinions concerning the demoralising effect of the present management of the Royal British Nurses' Association in relation to nurses and the public, and especially in representing the society as a "charitable institution" instead of a "professional association." The British Nurses' Association was founded by earnest women, to obtain legal status for trained nurses, and "to unite nurses together for their mutual help and support, and for the advancement in every way of their professional work," and not as a means of advertising a few medical men who have been so unsuccessful that they have ample time to devote to the mismanagement of nurses' affairs.

IT was significant that at the *Café Chantant* lately held at the Hotel Cecil, the eminent actors who, in all good faith, pleaded for funds to support the Association, referred to it as a "useful institution" for providing nurses to the public, and had evidently been led to suppose that this "useful charity" was deserving of alms! So that they are in no wise to blame for representing trained nurses as "objects of charity," and their once influential professional Association, as a non-paying commercial enterprise.

THE whole thing has been deeply humiliating, and bitterly distasteful to large numbers of well-educated and self-respecting women, who earn good remuneration in return for their skilled and devoted services to the public, and who repudiate with no uncertain voice the suggestion that these services have no commercial value, in the body politic, and in consequence that their vocation must be bolstered up with charitable doles, especially by the most undignified methods adopted by the hon. officers of the Royal British Nurses' Association.

THE fact that the majority of the Royal Family were called upon to attend this charity rout, and thereby to demonstrate their approval of the principle that trained nurses are "objects of charity," and not, as they claim to be, members of a skilled and self-supporting profession, is to be deeply deplored, and has naturally excited adverse comment, and we, with our usual candour, have no hesitation in saying that it will take more than royal patronage to reinstate the Royal British Nurses' Association in public estimation, unless its methods of management are materially altered.

BUT this latest *Café Chantant* outrage thrust upon the members of the Royal British Nurses' Association without their consent will, no doubt, open the eyes of many to the dangers of government by bureaucracy, a method of government by which it has been found quite impossible to control the British people. "Our glorious Constitution" makes largely for the liberty of the subject, and the expression of individual opinion and rebellion has always been the result of attempting to suppress the nation's conscience. The absolute control of the British Nurses' Association is now in the hands of half-a-dozen vain, weak men, who imagine that they can stifle public opinion on the question of professional liberty for nurses, because they are able to "gag" these poor nurses themselves who are economically dependent upon them, and over whom the present "hospital system" gives them much power and control. But the public conscience is slowly awakening to its duty on this question, and is gradually grasping the true state of affairs. By and bye, when it is fully awake, we shall see if it will permit this special tyranny to flourish in its midst. We do not think so.

### GILDING THE PILL.

IT is to be regretted that nurses look in vain in the medical press for one word of condemnation of this violation of their professional self-respect, and that one must turn to the *Saturday Review*, for a few plain words on the ethics of this phase of modern philanthropy in an article on the British Nurses' Association "kick up," headed "Gilding the Pill."

"THE question whether it is fair to take advantage of his ignorance and snobbery (of the self-made man), encroaches upon a wide field of ethics. No doubt we are confronted by the naked fact that the vast majority will not subscribe to charities in the old humdrum way, even though a stout percentage of the gifts be devoted to advertising the names of the givers. But there must be some limit to the permissible methods of compelling their generosity, some bounds to the enormous indiscretions which charity may decently cover. It would seem as though we had not yet advanced very far since the day when a duchess bought a butcher's vote with a kiss. When we see high-born ladies proffering programmes to Jews who loll and smoke at little tables, when we find grand seigniors frequenting uncongenial and even undesirable society to extract a few hundreds for a pet scheme, we are free to confess that they had been better advised to subscribe the money themselves rather than to earn it in such devious ways. It has, perhaps,

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