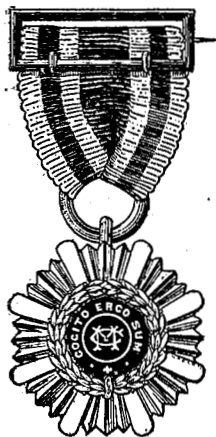


Matrons in Council.**THE REASONS FOR THE STATE REGISTRATION OF TRAINED NURSES.***

By MRS. J. A. CRAWFORD,
President of the Householders' League.

I HAVE been asked to represent the views of the general public on the question of nursing. As a preliminary, I may just mention that those



views are not there—the horizon of the light-hearted public is entirely clear of those views. The nurse's veil—a most silly appendage in this climate, by the way—may wave from the dome of St. Paul's, or—to put it in more modern form—may float over the passing 'bus to all eternity. Yet still, the man in the street will murmur "Well, there ain't any," and it is not until a gracious Providence hits out and strikes the individual, that the suggestion

of the advisability of providing beforehand for such accidents, breaks gently on his understanding. Then, and not till then, he will demand it in a large-voiced way, and rend the heavens with his indignation if that which was invisible to him before, does not instantaneously rush to his aid, fully equipped, up to date, and quite capable of restoring him to his normal condition, if only he can and will pay for it.

"How blest the wretch who long has tossed

Upon a bed of pain,
When he resumes his vigour lost
And cuts about again!"

Even so, and on the quality of the nursing the aforesaid wretch receives, depends the quality of his subsequent vigour. I think you will allow that?

Few people realize the heavy weight of responsibility and anxiety that nursing entails. Their imagination will not take them into the dimly-lighted room—in the hush of the smallest hours—that awful turn of the tide time which is neither night nor morning—through the wide open window you can see the solemn planets setting in a purple black sky—the wind has dropped, scarcely the ghostliest whisper comes to the silent, ghostly figure bending, with restrained breath, watching, watching for the

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change in the still, still form outlined under the white sheet—pulseless, and all but the corpse the next few moments may or may not make of it—and that fearful moment arrives, and must be met—on the instant—by that watcher, alone! Whatever form that change may take, out of the myriads of possible forms, that one solitary being must be ready to deal with it—and with lightning speed. And how is that varied emergency to be met successfully unless a long training for it has been undergone? Think of the endless number of knowledges—nebulous knowledges—that have to be gathered, ready to be "precipitated," as chemists say,—to be crystallised in the flash of that vivid moment.

It is not for me to enter on professional disputes, so I will not make any allusion to the excitement now raging over what the press terms the "Hospital Scandal." I should prefer calling it "discreditable"; we know that is the more parliamentary word, can be used safely, and so on. We all know it was not for want of volunteers among the nurses that the ridiculously small number was sent out. It was—but that is another story. However, you may take heart, my ladies, for you will not always be shelved. The "Powers" seem determined to "keep us moving" as police treat a dangerous crowd, it is likely there will be plenty of work for you in the immediate future. The immutable rule of the universe "one person's necessity being another person's opportunity," is not likely to be upset by any number of human officials. You have been through a time of, we will say, misunderstanding? You have been much maligned and misrepresented, you have borne the brunt of battle, privation and danger—some of your body have died—you have toiled and been rewarded with the wages of a London charwoman—the Government appraised your services at that value—and I hope you like it! There are many thousands of medals being prepared—ribbons and decorations, titles and honours, peerages, busts, memorials, and so forth. Do you think you will get any? Oh, no, my ladies—not unless you raise your voices and make your protest. The human must always make its protest, for—in the way of injustice and wrongs generally—we may reckon on being given just as much as we will take. We have to ask for what we want—and see that we get it, moreover. This fundamental fact was borne in upon me in very early youth—what time the holidays arrived and the brothers came from school, and were forthwith taken to three pantomines in one week! three pantomines in one week!! Can you imagine anything more exasperating? Young as I was, and an in-

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