

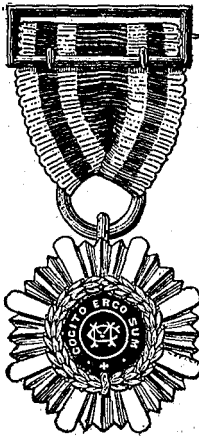
Matrons in Council.

THE CELEBRATION BY TRAINED NURSES OF THE NEW CENTURY.*

BY MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK,

President of the International Council of Nurses.

STANDING as we do on the last rung of the nineteenth century ladder, it is not surprising that, with the keen desire for knowledge which has



been the predominant impulse of women's energy during the last fifty years, we should all wish to stand on tip-toe and peep over into the arena of the twentieth century, and it would be vastly interesting to learn what each individual present would see. Being somewhat of a clairvoyant, I am satisfied to know that, to the great Tournament of the new century, the fair knight, Woman, has sent forth the inviolable Herald of Hope,

to sound her coming in the lists, and that the officers of Arms will therefore be compelled to declare her armorial insignia—or, in the correct language of heraldry, blazon her Arms—arms which, depicted on her simple Lozenge (women may not bear an escutcheon), set forth her past achievements as the Mother of Mankind. Arms nobly quartered with Life and Love, Labour, and other gifts, and the motto of which is "Duty."

Surely it suffices us to know that so worthy a knight, fighting as she will do with the Weapons of Reason, cannot be disarmed by opponents wielding the obsolete implements of prejudice.

And now for a retrospective glance. One of the great battalions in the legions of woman's progress, which have been slowly yet surely marching towards the worthy goal of organization during the past century, are trained nurses; and the names of the great leaders Elizabeth Fry, Frederika Fliedner, Florence Nightingale, Sophia Wagner, Agnes Jones, Isabel Hampton, Lavinia Dock, Isla Stewart, are but a few of those to whom we owe gratitude and allegiance. Some dear brave things (for all pioneers are very brave) have passed from hence; but others, we rejoice to know, are with us, full of life and spirit for further effort. And it has some long time been my hope that a meeting of the nurses of all nations in one great international gathering should be held, just for the pleasure of meeting and taking by the hand those who have worked so worthily and already done much for us, of seeing their

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bright faces, exchanging speech with them, of learning from them of their ways and means, what they have already accomplished, and what of aspiration is theirs for time to come. That such a gathering would be delightful, and of untold value from an educational standpoint, there can be no question; what other results for good it might produce, time alone could show.

It seems almost impossible, so rapid is the flight of time, that it is now eight years ago since the hope for such an International Congress of Nurses was first expressed during my visit to the States in 1892, and that after all these years such an event is probable. Perhaps the years of waiting have been all to the good. We are all vastly more experienced in nursing politics than we were a decade ago—and if in England we have a sorry tale to tell of disappointment and wrong, it is quite otherwise with our transatlantic sisters, and we gladly rejoice at their evidence of wisdom and with their well deserved success.

But the advent of the new century is inspiring. We all realise the pleasure of beginning a new day. Hope is our faithful herald—did she not wave our banner, how we should flag by the way, and Hope says to British Nurses—"the old century is dying, let it die, be thankful that in it you awoke to a sense of personal and professional responsibility, that in it you saw the dawn of day; look forward, gird up your loins, be up and doing, the beautiful Twentieth Century Day is at hand, your work lies before. Neither yesterday, nor to-day is of account, wipe them off the calendar. It is with the glad good-morrow you have to do—to-morrow is yours, and to-morrow, and yet to-morrow." How, therefore, will you celebrate these festal days of Hope? Here in the old world—which has become so weary after the passing of so many centuries of time, centuries in which so many Kings and Causes have come and gone—been fought for, and forgotten—and whose Faith is somewhat faint by the way? Or there in the far radiant West, in the warm heart of that vast continent which throbs with the generous ardour of youth, which reckes little of Kings and Causes, but as yet has faith in Man and his Mission?

This environment of Hope, it would seem, is essential to the success of our International Meeting, and the news that from the United States of America an invitation is to be sent to the nurses of all nations to gather together in Buffalo in September, 1901, to celebrate the coming century, is as good as it can be, and it is in the hope of interesting you in this happy event that our Council arranged that I might speak of it to-day.

I am happy to be able to announce that we

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