

starve and rot in hovels day by day, and are sweated unto death so that others may, with twinkling feet, walk delicately.

Thus it comes that to organise the members of any profession or trade the law must be invoked and all the powerful social influences, when unleashed in opposition, must be with almost superhuman determination and energy fought step by step.

A quarter of a century ago the pioneers of nursing reform were young and trustful beings. They demanded justice, and, of course, their demand would be at once conceded! Political economy was a science they had yet to study, and its laws were to be acquired by some very unpleasant lessons.

Think of our sweetly ingenuous demands! How child-like and bland! "Please, Mr. Hospital Autocrat," we said, "we think we could help you concerning our own affairs. Only 'The toad beneath the harrow knows Exactly where each tooth-print goes.'

"We are the people who have laboured interminable hours in the service of the sick. We have swept and garnished your dirty wards and reduced mortality to a minimum. We have slept in stuffy tenements, and from our scanty salaries supplemented your supper of one sardine. Our brothers the healers, hustling and impatient persons, are soaring away into realms of asepticism and demanding expert service from breathless and un-instructed Pros. We must soar with them.

"We only require a few such simple things.

"We only want liberty of conscience and speech and press; free exercise for our mental faculties, so that we may evolve a sound system of professional education. We want to become expert workers; we want the State, of which we form part, to recognise us as such. We want legal status and power to protect our cloth.

"We only want to be self-respecting, self-supporting human beings, with the power to do our duty in that state of life to which we have been called by God."

What ingenuous prattle!

As if these demands did not comprise the sum total of human grace!

Cannot you see Mr. Hospital Autocrat smile—and then grow purple in the face?

Anyway, the struggle for the State Registration of Nurses has taught us many truths. One, that there is money in unorganised labour for those who manipulate that labour. We were cheap; efficient education would cost money; the hall-mark of legal status would raise our price, and that the managers of the largest and richest charitable institutions combined to prevent. For a quarter of a century they have treated our just demands with

unscrupulous opposition, and it is this lack of generosity which has convinced us that no class of worker is safe until protected by legislation; that to leave nurses to the mercy of even the most altruistic asvogel may result in bleached bones.

Now the members of this Society thoroughly realise the economic situation.

For just here duty steps in. We are associated together not only for our own protection but primarily for the protection of the sick we serve, and we are determined to have the educational and economic condition of our profession placed upon a thoroughly sound basis, to enable us to do our duty. And there are signs that this most discreditable struggle between the weak and strong, between right and wrong, will at no distant date result in victory for us. Recollect what difficulties we have overcome in the past, and what enormous progress the organisation of nursing has made all over the world.

Let us give credit first to conscience, whose divine inspiration no temporal power can control. It was conscience which inspired the professional press, through which the nurses of the world have become articulate. We may congratulate ourselves that it was from this land that the first message went forth in print—the teaching of Florence Nightingale—followed by the little NURSING RECORD—now the BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING—which first awakened the nurses of the world to action, so that in every land the nurses now have their organisations and their professional press—and many have legal status. What bogies of prejudice have been tilted at at the point of the pen, and overthrown! And now in this country, year by year, thoughtful men and women are in increasing numbers associating themselves together to urge the Government to give time for the Bill for the State Organisation of Trained Nursing, so indispensable an adjunct to progressive medicine, a demand which cannot now be long refused.

But a long and strong pull is now demanded; energy, personal service, money—we want as much of each as you can possibly give. It all means self-sacrifice, but our profession is founded on that. Don't be content to look on whilst a few labour to breaking point. Don't let England be the very last land to grant recognition to its band of devoted nurses and protection to the sick, and if we don't hurry up this will be the invidious result of our dependent economic condition. Let us make up our minds that one more annual meeting—making a round decade of meetings—shall be our last, and that it shall be held next year for the purpose of proclaiming that our Bill has become law.

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