

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD

EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,292

SATURDAY, JANUARY 4, 1913.

Vol. L.

EDITORIAL.

THE CALL OF PUBLIC DUTY.

The New Year is a time of good resolutions, for deciding on plans for the future, and for taking stock of what has so far been accomplished.

Trained nurses can make no better resolve at this season than to determine that they will do all in their power to ensure the honourable recognition of their work for the body politic, for, during the past year, they have received several lessons that, though it may be utilized, it is not a force to be recognized.

The persistent inaction of the Government in this country in regard to the demand of trained nurses for the regulation and recognition of their profession by the State is a discreditable feature of the policy adopted towards legislation for women generally. It is now over seven years since a Select Committee of the House of Commons unanimously reported that "it is desirable that a Register of Nurses should be kept by a Central Body appointed by the State," and four years since Lord Ampthill's Nurses Registration Bill passed the House of Lords without a division, and with the support of His Majesty's Government, but still no Government measure is introduced into the House of Commons to give effect to the recommendation of the Select Committee, and nurses and the public have to depend for the discussion of this vitally important question on the luck of a private member in the ballot.

The disastrous result of this supineness was practically illustrated during the discussion of the National Insurance Bill, when, it will be remembered, that midwives who were originally left out of its provisions, were able to obtain the insertion of a Clause by which women entitled to the maternity

benefit may receive the services of either registered medical practitioners or certified midwives, thus protecting both their right to employment, and the quality of the services rendered. Trained nurses were unable to obtain the incorporation of effective safeguards in regard to their profession, inasmuch as the term trained nurse has no legal significance, and therefore cannot be incorporated in an Act of Parliament. The result is that insured persons are left in regard to the quality of nursing to be supplied under the Act without the safeguards provided in respect to their medical attendants and midwives.

We know that many nurses hesitate to take a strong line where their own interests are concerned. But the Nurses' Registration Bill is not framed in the interests of nurses only, but for the protection of the sick against fraudulent and incompetent nursing care.

It is just here that the duty of nurses to take public action is apparent. They might be content to waive their own undoubted rights, but they cannot do so without ignoring their public duty, and doing injury to the sick, whose welfare they should be the first to safeguard.

No one knows better than nurses the unnecessary suffering, injury, and even death caused by incompetent nursing, through the lack of any standard of professional education for members of their profession, and, therefore, the obligation imposed upon them is correspondingly strong to work for the enforcement of such a standard under State control.

Let each of our readers determine that by every means in her power she will endeavour to forward legislation regulating the profession of nursing during the coming year, to the end that the community and the sick may be efficiently served.

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