

# THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED  
**THE NURSING RECORD**  
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,408.

SATURDAY, MARCH 27, 1915.

Vol. LIV

## EDITORIAL.

### THE STATE NEEDS NURSES.

The call by the State upon women to offer for war service in the industrial army, is one which has been widely acclaimed and responded to. Many who have hitherto been in doubt as to the means of fulfilling their desire to be of use in this time of national emergency have welcomed, as simple and practical, the invitation of the Government to enrol themselves as willing to undertake definite paid employment if called upon. But to those who are concerned with the organization of labour, the question of the substitution of women for men in any particular trade, where a shortage exists, appears a most difficult and delicate question.

Our own interest is centred more especially on the shortage of trained nurses, now officially admitted, and the methods by which it is proposed to meet it, and it is instructive, in connection with it, to observe the views of women on the general question.

Miss Mary Macarthur, who is intimately acquainted with labour problems, is of opinion that the Government, before issuing its appeal, would have been well advised to take into consultation the representatives of the organized trades, both men and women, and claims further that one of the first safeguards to be insisted on, is the appointment of a National Representative Committee, including a strong representation of industrial interests, and that its composition must be such as to inspire confidence in the minds of the working people. We warmly support this proposition, and take this opportunity of claiming representation, upon such a committee, of the self-governing societies of trained nurses.

### WHAT IS THE POSITION OF NURSING AT THIS CRISIS?

There is a declared shortage of nurses, which is giving the Medical Department of the War Office serious anxiety, and it is calling upon married and other retired nurses to come forward and assist in relieving the situation. That

the demands of a war of the present magnitude should strain the resources of trained nurses to the utmost is inevitable. But, had the expert opinion of nurses themselves, expressed over and over again for the last quarter of a century, been heeded by the Government, the shortage would never have assumed the present serious dimensions. For years those who have studied the Nursing Question most deeply have foreseen both depreciation and shortage; they have pointed out the increasing difficulty in securing probationers of the right type, and indeed in many instances of any type, and have informed the Premier, and other members of the Government over and over again, that nursing in its present unorganized condition fails to attract the women whom it is most desirable to secure. They have pleaded for the passing of a Nurses' Registration Act, through which a minimum standard of nursing education shall be defined by a Council on which members of the nursing profession have adequate representation, and for the maintenance of a Register of trained nurses who have given proof of having attained the required standard. Such a Register would at the present moment be invaluable, both as evidence of the qualifications of nurses seeking appointments, and as affording a means of communicating with trained nurses throughout the Kingdom.

No one has done more to prevent just organization than the men who are now foremost in proposing futile remedies in the press.

### WHAT CAN BE DONE AT THE PRESENT MOMENT?

In the first place, if the Joint War Committee is to control the nursing in military auxiliary hospitals, organized associations of nurses, who understand the professional and economic side of the question, should be represented upon it. Of this, men and women of wealth and social influence know little, yet from committees dealing with nursing questions representation of the organized workers is determinedly excluded, while their wealthy employers, who are seldom in sympathy with the economic independence of women, undertake to control their work.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)