

THE
BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,514.

SATURDAY, APRIL 7, 1917.

Vol. LVIII.

EDITORIAL.

CITIZENSHIP FOR WOMEN.

When our great American colleague, Lavinia Dock—trained nurse, humanitarian, and suffragist was last in this country, having crossed the Atlantic in order to help forward the women's suffrage movement, she expressed the opinion that nurses in the United Kingdom would never get a just Registration Act until an Act for the Enfranchisement of Women was passed. How clear sighted that opinion was we knew at the time, nevertheless registrationists continued to work for the organization of their profession by the State, feeling it was their duty to go forward, though sharing Miss Dock's conviction.

In the convulsion caused by the war, and the setting free of the forces of brutality which have appalled the whole world, one thing has become clear, that the will of the people will be a greater power in the future than ever in the past. The most dramatic instance of this is the revolution in Russia, but the fact that the proposals of the Speaker's Conference on Electoral Reform in this country were so largely unanimous, when dealing with highly contentious questions, including the enfranchisement of women, is amazing, indeed in the course of the debate which took place in the House of Commons on the subject on March 28th, the Prime Minister, when expressing the indebtedness of the House to the Speaker for his services, said that it was "nothing short of a miracle that he should have so piloted the proceedings as to achieve such a measure of unanimity at an inter-party Conference, and, in the judgment of the Government, it would be a great misfortune, and a national waste, if the results of that Conference were thrown away without being utilized for the purpose

of settling all the controversies with which it dealt."

It is evidently the view of the leaders of the Woman's Suffrage Movement that the proposals to incorporate in the Electoral Reform Bill, which is to be introduced after the Easter recess, a provision for the enfranchisement of women, afford an opportunity for securing a measure of women's enfranchisement which should not be lost, for Mrs. Fawcett informed the Prime Minister when he received a deputation of women on the subject, on March 30th, that they preferred an imperfect scheme, which had a chance of passing to the most perfect which had no such chance; and Mrs. Pankhurst pointed out that, to get through, any measure of franchise reform should be more or less upon a basis of general agreement in a time of war. It therefore remains for nurses to use their influence in support of this agreed measure. Out of evil will come good if, as Mr. Lloyd George is absolutely convinced, "one thing that will emerge out of this war will be the conviction that women must be admitted to a complete partnership of the nation."

When this is achieved nurses will have a lever they never before possessed for bringing pressure to bear upon Parliament in regard to nursing legislation, for they will assume the new dignity of constituents of Members of Parliament, and human nature being what it is their interests will receive the consideration which, so far, has been reserved for those who possess the vote. We look forward with hope to increased legislation on questions of health, with, in the forefront of the programme, a Nurses' Registration Act worthy of British Citizens, and not a measure based on their present defenceless position in the body politic.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)