

only referring now to associations of workers, because it is needless to remind our readers that Hospitals, Homes, and even mercantile bodies fall into a totally distinct category, and that throughout the country there are scores of these which have for generations borne the same mark of State approval of work well done for the commonwealth. The point of our argument is that the title which we are considering is bestowed by the State, through the hands of its reigning Sovereign, very rarely upon professional bodies, and only when conspicuous merit has been shown or conspicuous success has been achieved by such associations.

The Royal British Nurses' Association has now received this high mark of approval from the Government and Her Most Gracious Majesty. This being so, there are two interesting points to be noted. Not only is this, we believe, the first instance in which a union of women workers has received this Royal title, but this is the first time that the British Nurses' Association in particular, and Nurses in general, have received a definite recognition from the State in this country. It is a good omen, therefore, for any future legislative action which may be taken upon their behalf. The peculiar appropriateness of the conferment of this honour upon the Association at the present juncture will be universally recognised, because it is well known that the great work in which it has been engaged for nearly three years has now been successfully initiated, and that in a very short time the first Register of Trained Nurses will be issued.

We are inclined to believe that the present moment might, with equal felicity, be chosen by the managers of the Association for another and most important new departure.

As our readers are well aware, our columns for many months past have, now and again, contained letters from Members of the Association suggesting the institution of a Badge. We lately instituted a competition as to the design which might be considered most appropriate, and published engravings of some out of the many devices consequently sent in. We publish this week a selection from a very large mass of correspondence which, during the last year, we have received upon the subject. It is, and has always been, a source of regret to us that we have no connection with the Royal British Nurses' Association. We could have been much more useful, and would gladly have been so, had any official bond existed between us, although we are well aware that it would largely have hampered us in certain steps which, being entirely independent, we have deemed it our duty to take from time to time. But we now venture to presume upon the con-

stant help and support which we have during the whole of its existence rendered to the Association, to urge, with all our power, upon its Committee the necessity for some steps being taken in this matter of a Badge of Membership. Many months ago we devoted some consideration to the subject, and then showed that there were grave objections to the Association, at that early period of its existence, instituting such a decoration for its Members. The progress of time and the success of the Association have removed or modified many of those objections. And, on the other hand, we have no hesitation in saying that there is now a very wide-spread wish on the part of the Members—which did not then exist—to possess some outward and visible sign of their connection with their great professional Association. We have been much struck with the steady growth of this feeling, as evinced by our correspondents all over the world. In fact, we have only this week received a letter from Australasia in which the writer—a lady in a highly responsible position—says:—

"We are overrun with all sorts of riff-raff who call themselves Nurses, and the public judges Nurses by them, because it has no means of knowing they are not Nurses at all. If the B.N.A. would give Members a distinctive Badge, all the best Nurses out here would be glad to join it, and be proud to wear its emblem. At present I get nothing at all for being a Member, and seriously think of starting—with influential friends whom I have in Melbourne—an Australian Nurses' Association, and then we would simply give ourselves a Badge. I am proud of being a Member of the B.N.A., however, and would be sorry to see any secession from anything connected with the old country. But out here there must be some clear simple way of distinguishing good Nurses from bad; and if the B.N.A. does not take up the matter very soon we shall go right ahead for ourselves."

Now this is by no means an isolated example, although it puts the question into a nutshell. We have received very similar epistles from India, from the Cape, and from all parts of the United Kingdom. We believe that unless some action is taken soon by the Committee, the greatest disappointment will be felt by a very large number of the Members. We would respectfully, and solely for the benefit of the Association, appeal to the Committee to take this subject into consideration. If it will only institute inquiries, it will find that a very widespread feeling exists in favour of the institution of a Badge, and as one of our correspondents puts it, "If the Members want such a simple thing, and are willing to pay for it, haven't they almost a right to expect it?" It

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