

A PRACTICAL STANDARD OF NURSING.

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The following Paper was read by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick before the Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland, in London, on June 16th, 1898, and published in the *NURSING RECORD*, now *THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING*, on the 16th of July of that year. It is of interest to the Nursing Profession of to-day as evidence that twenty years ago the "explorers" were even then far in advance of their time, and that in this year of grace 1918 the Nursing College propaganda is merely an adoption, without acknowledgment, of the State Registration programme. As, however, "imitation is the sincerest form of flattery," let us hope that in future the College will be inspired by the spirit as well as the letter of our law.

A PRACTICAL STANDARD OF NURSING.

LADIES—I have given my Paper the title of "A Practical Standard of Nursing," because, if we are ever to attain to a useful professional standard, either in ethics, education, or practice, we must aim at a practical standard; and, in the forcible vernacular of the States, we must not "chump off more than we can chew."

When I was a small child, I remember seeing an old woman seated smoking on a mile-stone. Every now and again she shaded her eyes with her hand, and looked intently along a straight road. I enquired for whom she was watching?

"I ain't watching for nobody," she replied; "I'm awaiting Time. I passed him on this 'ere road upwards of twenty year ago, and he ain't yet in sight. 'Tis strange, sometimes I think they've clapped him in the pound. It ain't good to be afore Time." This old woman was considered mad. She was a philosopher.

Now there are many women, to-day, keenly alive to the misery of being "afore time;" and the more eager amongst us, who have forged ahead along the road of Progress, are apt to feel somewhat disconsolate, seated on Life's mile-stone waiting for Time. And we scorn the platitude of the inert, in which there is a grain of truth, when they remark: "A good time is coming" or "all in good time," "the time is not yet come" or "another time," and "sometime," and worst of all, "anytime." My motto is, "there is no time like the present," and in this I hope you will all agree.

One fact is clear. The majority of nurses, who think, are most satisfactorily dissatisfied with their professional affairs—but, as yet, how many are there amongst us who can focus the reason of this discontent? I venture to reply

very few. Now this is a dangerous condition of mind, because the human being who does not know his own mind is sport for fools, and food for knaves. Let us, therefore, take a clean sheet and write down in plain figures the sum total of our desires under the two headings: What is wanted, and how to get it.

What is wanted, I venture to suggest:—

- (1) A Minimum Standard of Professional Education.
- (2) An Impartial Examination.
- (3) A Registrable Diploma of Nursing.
- (4) State Registration.

How to get it:—

- (1) By Organisation and Co-operation.
- (2) By forming for this purpose a National Association of Graduate Nurses upon a basis of just representation.
- (3) The adoption by the National Association of a Practical Standard of Nursing Education, Examination, Certification, and Registration.
- (4) By educating the Public, and through them, Parliament in the justice of the Nurses' Cause.

All of which means, when summed up in one word, Work. It will be well, then, to look matters in the face, and sum up our experience in the past; how we are situated to-day; and our hopes for the future.

It was in the year 1887, that the first proposal was made to form an Association of British Nurses, "for mutual help and protection, and for the advancement, in every way, of their professional work." Many here present to-day were pioneers in that movement, and know with what singleness of purpose and high aims, the British Nurses' Association was formed—and how arduous were the labours of those who worked for this Association until the granting of the Royal Charter in 1893. My reference to the following five years, which brings us up to date, shall be brief, because with the revision of the Bye-laws, an official and medical dictatorship has been inaugurated, and for all practical purposes that Corporation ceases to be an Association of Nurses with either power of expression or performance. The policy of that Association is inspired and guided by one consistent principle—and that is the denial to trained nurses of their right of free co-operation for "mutual help and protection and professional advancement." In proof of this assertion I will give instances.

In 1894 the President signed, on behalf of the Executive Committee, a statement which recorded that "It is the hope of the Corpora-

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