

NURSES' WEEK IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

VICTORY IN VIEW.

Last week we left off on a steadfast note, intimating to our readers that, whether our Nurses' Registration Bill met with success or defeat in the House of Commons, on its Second Reading on March 28th, the State Registration policy would be "business as usual."

Since our last issue we have lived through some momentous and ecstatic hours, culminating in the supreme moment when, after a three hours' debate on our Bill, the Speaker put the question and was answered with decided "Ayes," and when he invited opposition—Silence! Thus our Bill was accorded a second reading, without a division, and committed to a Standing Committee.

No nurse who was privileged to be present on that historic occasion—the birth of the Nursing Profession—will ever forget it, or the thrill of pride and joy experienced by those who love and honour their noble vocation above all other work in the world. To those of us, associated together for thirty years, who have in season and out of season laboured for the Organization of Trained Nursing by the State, the thrill of thankfulness and triumph was indescribable. Silently and with deep emotion we clasped hands, and then away to flash messages of heartfelt thanks to the members of the new and enlightened Parliament, who had presented our case in so masterly a manner, or supported it with such sympathetic understanding.

To the medical members of the House, who paid such a fine tribute of homage to the skill and devotion of the trained nurse, the whole nursing profession owes a deep debt of gratitude.

But how did this wonderful success come about?

Firstly, do not let us forget the thirty years' drudgery in support of the Registration movement against stupendous odds.

Secondly, let us recognize that organization played a potential part in ultimate success.

Thirdly, how about Napoleonic advice—audacity—but that is another story!

On March 10th the Fates "made a little magic" and placed it in the hands of a backer of our Bill. This favourite of fortune, Major R. W. Barnett, decided to devote his chance to the promotion of the Nurses' Registration Bill, framed by the Central Committee. This he did by introducing the Bill on the following day.

The time was opportune, and the organized Nurses' Societies availed themselves of their chance. The glorious news flashed North, South, East and West. Telephone bells tinkled, telegraph wires quivered, typewriters rattled, postbags bulged with letters—containing a few lines: "Our Bill is down for second reading on March 28th. Act."

Up rose the organized battalions, each one moved to its special duty, and for the intervening days and nights brought expert knowledge and conviction to bear upon the seven hundred members of the new Parliament, with reason, persuasion, unanswerable arguments, in letters, leaflets, and "memos," and last, but by no means least, *viva voce*.

The newly enfranchised Citizen Nurse invaded the Lobby of the House. She came in modestly wearing her uniform, ribbons, and badges, singly and in batches, under the wing of sympathetic Matrons of the Old Guard. The presence of these women, many of them in military uniform, straight from tending our sick and wounded, gentle, eager-eyed, but determined, gave the *coup de grâce* to opposition. Quietly they inscribed their green tickets—most kindly instructed by the "men in blue"—awaited the coming of their members, and when they appeared, in dulcet tones made known their professional needs, and as they smilingly departed, whispered to their admiring colleagues, "He's promised!"

At teatime the Citizen Nurse was to be seen in the tea-room, the guest of her member or friend—gay little parties, evidently enjoying charming hospitality, to say nothing of the celebrated buns! Later groups of nurses were beamed round the House, given seats in the galleries, listened to interesting debates, felt thoroughly "in it," and came away from association with the Mother of Parliaments, wiser and happier women.

As for the "guardians in blue," with the utmost courtesy they guided the neophytes through the intricacies of Parliamentary etiquette, bringing forcibly to mind the Lord Chamberlain's minions, who at Court look after one's train with such elegant solicitude!

On March 29th we had a "splendid press," which being interpreted means that the news sheets gave the Nurses' Registration Bill their blessing.

So far good. But there must be no relaxation of effort, until this long delayed and urgently needed Reform Bill, for the standardisation of Nursing, and the protection of the public is inscribed on the Statute Book of these Realms.

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