

# Royal British Nurses' Association.

(Incorporated by



Royal Charter.)

THIS SUPPLEMENT BEING THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE CORPORATION.

## TRAINED NURSES' ANNUITY FUND.

We remind our members once more of the Sale of Work to be held in aid of the above fund on Friday, November 28th, at 67, Eaton Place, and we ask the members of the R.B.N.A. and affiliated societies to set aside that afternoon in order to attend the sale. Her Royal Highness the Princess Christian will open the sale at noon.

We take the opportunity to thank those members of the Association, who have sent so many beautiful pieces of work and generous subscriptions for their great kindness to the aged and sick members of the nursing profession.

## [SALARIES.

Not long ago, while discussing the question of nurses' salaries, a casual remark received the astounding reply, that to raise the nurses' salaries would cause them "to lose the spirit of nursing." An enquiry as to whether the medical men in Harley Street and elsewhere had lost the spirit of healing, because they obtained the just award of years of study and labour, met with no response. It is just because their qualifications have been recognised at their true value that it has been possible for them to raise the standard of their profession and to enlarge its borders. And so it would be with the nursing profession if the members of it were justly treated. It is all very well to talk of their service to the State, and then pay them less than the salary at which one can procure a domestic servant. Only by giving to the nurses the chance of a reasonable degree of comfort, leisure and freedom from anxiety, as to their future, can you expect them to possess anything of the bright, alert personality that is the enviable quality of the V.A.D. who has not had most of the mentality driven out of her by long hours of routine and the cramping bands of poverty.

The nurses are, in effect, the last British wage slaves, and it is really better to be a slave in the ordinary sense of the word than to be such a wage slave. In the first case the employers would at least take considerable care of her health and, for their own credit, would see that she was properly clothed, whereas, in the case of the wage slave, she may break down and drop out of the

ranks, and there will be a hundred younger and stronger women ready to step into the place she has lost.

Various reports on nurses' salaries have been drawn up, but they are but as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal unless nurses are going to make an effort themselves to take up the cudgels and enforce a better scale than at present exists. On every hand the nurses are exploited and, except on the part of the nurses outside the institutions, no stand is ever taken to improve matters. Full advantage has been taken by their employers of the lack of co-operation between the members of the profession themselves and, in case they should show signs of asking for salaries better than, or as good as, those of domestic servants there have been liberally purveyed all those sweet, sentimental platitudes, we are accustomed to, on the vocational aspect of nursing. Such an aspect was all very well in the old conventional times, when those who cared for the sick were assured of care and affection in their old age, but the halo, so often metaphorically pressed on the meek head of the nurse, is soon lost sight of when a premature breakdown or old age makes her dependent upon the resources of others. Then we hear every possible cause put forward as the reason for her indigence except the right ones that she has never stood up for her own economic independence, that she has been forced to commence the actual practice of her profession at a much later age than any other class of women, and that, owing to this, and that she wears out sooner than a woman in some less strenuous branch of work, she has comparatively few years in order to secure independence for herself. Considering the short working life of the nurse her remuneration should be higher rather than lower than that of other women. We hear so much everywhere of the great privilege of caring for the sick, and no one questions this; but what we do question are the conditions of service at the present time. If it is the privilege of the nurse to give such service, equally it is the privilege of the public to see that she does not have to render all the sacrifice as well as all the service, to see that at least she is given opportunity to enjoy some of the good and gracious things of life, and to provide against dependence in her later years.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)