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## EDITORIAL.

### THE DANGER OF THE COMMERCIAL NURSING PRESS.

It is an axiom which requires no elaboration that every profession needs an organ in the press, owned, edited, and controlled by members of that profession; firstly, because no one else possesses the knowledge to deal adequately with its affairs, and secondly, because lay-edited class papers are usually commercial speculations frequently the property of employers, and primarily concerned with dividends. If, therefore, the interests of the shareholders and of the profession clash, the latter inevitably suffers.

That is the danger with which nurses have had to contend throughout the thirty years during which they were organising and working to obtain their Registration by the State, and had it not been for THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING, they would have had no weekly professionally edited journal, and would have been in a most dangerous and defenceless position.

When nurses first began to organise through the British Nurses' Association, the employers' press—*The Hospital* (organ, Hospitals' Association) was up in arms. That paper, of which the late Sir Henry (then Mr.) Burdett was editor, went so far as to suggest that the managers of hospitals should "enact that no member of their staff shall become a member of the new Association," and published an anonymous letter in which the writer, at whose identity it is not difficult to guess, suggested that the Association comprised "the scum of the nursing profession," and suggested as the meaning to attach to the words "Member of the British Nurses' Association," "a nurse who has taken refuge in it to obtain pseudo-respectability because she could not get it elsewhere."

History repeats itself, and when last year

Miss Maude MacCallum, a member of twenty years' standing of the Nurses' Co-operation, decided to form an Association of Nurses on Trade Union lines, the wrath and vindictive abuse of the above mentioned paper, together with *The Nursing Mirror*, were aroused. *The Nursing Mirror* found its opportunity in the circumstance that in the event of the Co-operation being dissolved, its accumulated funds will not go to the nurses on the staff, but to some other body, and stated of the promoters of the Union (Miss MacCallum and others), "the visions of the formation of an important professional Trades Union were clouded by want of capital. Then came the remembrance of the savings made by the Association."

It also published over the signature "A Loyal Sister," this person's advice to "all loyal sisters" of the Nurses' Co-operation to make a clean sweep of "these wild women" as their representatives on the Committee of Management of the Co-operation, and from the Home and staff. Miss MacCallum, as our readers are aware, wisely placed the matter in her solicitors' hands, and on their advice brought an action for libel in the High Court of Justice against her traducers, with the result that when they came into court their defence collapsed in the most ignominious manner, and she obtained her costs, £500 damages, and the unreserved withdrawal of all charges against her.

It is well for the nursing profession at large that the defendants selected for their unjustifiable attack a nurse having the grit and determination of which Miss MacCallum has shown herself possessed. But that does not make their conduct any the less tyrannical and cruel, and the whole case was an object lesson to nurses to support a professional organ in the press, which can be relied upon to place honour and professional interests before filthy lucre.

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