

Royal British Nurses' Association.

(Incorporated by



Royal Charter.)

THIS SUPPLEMENT BEING THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE CORPORATION.

CO-OPERATION.

At a time when we are striving to build up a strong, united, self-governing profession it is desirable that each member of it should give some thought to her own responsibilities. For to each trained nurse there does belong responsibility, and the profession cannot attain to the great ideals which many set before it, nor can the interests of its members be adequately protected and promoted until everyone has at least some small share in the work of organisation and enters into co-operation to some extent with those who take part in the management of the nurses' affairs.

To the word "co-operation" we find that nurses usually attach the most narrow meaning possible, the only meaning we fear that many find themselves able genuinely to appreciate. To them the word simply denotes a form of administration through which they will be kept supplied with work. Conditionally upon their receiving three or four guineas weekly, with board and laundry allowance in addition, they agree to pay to their "co-operation" the sum of one shilling and sevenpence or, it may be, two shillings, on each guinea they earn through its agency. On this rate of commission the whole of the administrative work (and it is very great) connected with their "co-operation" has to be carried on while their Committee also take the burden of responsibility for seeing to it that this "co-operation" remains financially sound. Most have forgotten that at its foundation the purpose of such a "co-operation" was somewhat different from that which is now more or less universally allocated to it. The idea in starting such "co-operations" was not that one person, charged with the work of administration, should also be responsible for finding cases for a certain number of nurses. The original purpose was simply that of enabling nurses to co-operate with one another in bringing work to a certain centre, thus to benefit one another and to add to their own opportunities for maintaining a private nursing practice.

But it is co-operation in a wider sense even than this which we would discuss; co-operation not in the interests of merely one group of nurses, but co-operation for the benefit of all trained nurses. At the present time we very frequently hear parents say that the very last field of work upon which they would allow their daughters to enter is that of nursing, and this decision has certainly

been justified by experience. But yet the conditions which have led to it are almost entirely due to the indifference of the nurses themselves, to their lethargy in regard to the efforts being made to improve these conditions. How small is the proportion who have entered into the work of organising the profession. By far the larger number either through indifference, laziness, overwork or stupidity have preferred to let others plough the furrow though they will not scorn to reap a share of the harvest.

The profession now stands at the beginning of an epoch big with opportunity, and unless nursing thought assumes the attitude that individual co-operation is a necessity to the well-being of the profession, none of the great privileges granted to the nurses will bring to them one twentieth part of the advantages which they might reap. In fact, so great are those privileges which have been placed within reach, that we may very safely say that now nurses, as a class, will prosper exactly to the extent to which they can co-operate in making use of their opportunities. But in their very lack of power or inclination to co-operate lies their danger, and until more of them direct their individual efforts to the promotion of a better organisation of the profession there is little hope that nursing will become the great profession which it ought to be.

Therefore, now that the holiday season is all but over, we would urge every nurse to resolve that she will fulfil as faithfully her duty to her profession as she fulfils her duty to her patient; that she will make a close study of affairs in her profession as regards educational matters, politics and economics, and that she will do what she can to help forward the work of organisation by urging every nurse she knows to join one or other of the organised societies of nurses.

THE R.B.N.A. MEMBERS' "AT HOME."

There will be a re-union of the members of the R.B.N.A. and its affiliated societies on the afternoon of Saturday, October 1st, from 3 to 6 p.m., and we hope that as many of those who can will make a point of being present at this, the first gathering after the holidays. We will be pleased if any member will bring friends with them.

Some of the members have promised us music, and tea will be provided at the usual cost of one shilling.

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