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EDITORIAL.

THE PROFESSION OF NURSING.

"The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars
But in ourselves that we are underlings."

Mr. R. Richardson, Member for Houghton-le-Spring, asked the Minister of Health, in the House of Commons on Wednesday, April 12th, a very important question, which we print on page 250, as to his knowledge of recent events in the General Nursing Council. And we regret that by his written reply the Minister showed himself both misinformed and out of touch with the views of trained nurses.

He first expressed the opinion that the Nurse Members of the Council seemed to him to be fairly represented on the new Committees. The question which the nurses have the right to ask is, Are the Members appointed best calculated to serve their interests? He further stated that of the nurse members who have ceased to serve on the Registration and Education Committees, the only one now in active practice represented fever nursing, and "this branch of nursing is already represented on both Committees by the Superintendent of an important fever hospital," wherein the Minister shows a fundamental lack of grip of the question. Nursing has never been an inferior branch of medicine, and is now a legally constituted profession, which can only be "represented" by its own members. That is a point which cannot be too strongly stressed, for it is vital.

The Minister said further that the appointment of Committees is wholly within the discretion of the Council, and that he does not propose to make representations as to the desirability of replacing a representative fever nurse upon the Education Committee. We agree with the first part of this statement, but the Nurses' Registration Act enjoins the Minister to have regard to the desirability of including in the Council persons having experience in the various forms of nursing, and it was not too much to hope that he would support the same principle in the constitution of the Committees.

When, under the Nurses' Registration Acts of 1919, Nursing was legally constituted a Profession, the promotion of the honour and prestige of the new Profession was the objective kept consistently before a section, at least, of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales. Parliament had granted wide powers to nurses, and they included in their ranks those who could wield them wisely and well. On the initiative of Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, Standing Committees were set up to deal with the large amount of detailed work with which the Council had to cope, and much valuable work has been performed by them. These Committees deal with Education and Examination, Registration, Mental Nursing, Disciplinary and Penal Cases, Finance, and General Purposes. The Nurse Members of the Council rightly kept in their own hands the Chair of the Registration Committee, electing thereto Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, who has made a lifelong study of this question; the Chair of the Education and Examination Committee, electing to this position Miss Lloyd-Still, head of the Nightingale Training School at St. Thomas's Hospital; and the Chair of the General Purposes Committee, involving the supervision of the Office of the Council, to which they elected Miss S. A. Villiers, the very experienced Matron of a large fever hospital. These positions carry both responsibility and power.

The cabal within the Council of College Matrons and Medical and lay members, the disruption as a result of the Committees, the eviction of expert nurses from the highly technical Registration and Education Committees, and the substitution of laywomen who can contribute little or nothing of value to their deliberations, are now matters of history. The Chairman of the Registration Committee has been replaced by the Medical Superintendent of a Fever Hospital, the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee by a laywoman. Of the six Standing Committees the only one which now has a Registered Nurse as Chairwoman is the Education and Examination Committee, so determinedly has the great be-

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