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EDITORIAL.

A PUBLIC AND PROFESSIONAL DUTY.

Many highly qualified nurses have asked me, both verbally and by letter, whether they should register under the present General Nursing Council for England and Wales, to which I answer emphatically, "Register, register now." It is your duty to the public, to your Profession, to yourself.

The efficient professional education of nurses, the right to a definite measure of self-government, the protection of the public whom we serve from incompetent attendants, are the reforms to be accomplished by State Registration—reforms for which I and others have worked, against the most unscrupulous opposition, for over thirty years.

We have had the joy of seeing those principles endorsed by the King, Lords, and Commons, and the Nurses' Registration Acts placed upon the Statute Book of these Realms. It is now the duty of all loyal supporters of those principles to do their utmost to make the Acts a success, to build up their profession upon a legal basis. Before they can do so they must take possession of their kingdom by placing their names on one of the three Registers. They will then, as Registered Nurses, not only have the prestige which such registration confers, but will be in a position to help forward those improvements in their Profession for which their legal status affords to them, for the first time, adequate powers.

I am not surprised at the indignation expressed to me, both at the cruel attempt to deprive nurses of the record of their Certificates on the State Register for England and Wales, and at the persecution to which I have been subjected in my endeavours to secure just conditions of registration for the trained nurses of the Kingdom.

It was at the meeting of the General Nursing Council in October last, when I offered uncompromising opposition to the unjust proposal not to insert the record of Certificates on the Register until future nurses gained the State Certificate, that I realised the bitter antagonism to the self-government of the Profession which has since been displayed upon the part of the majority of the members of the Council, and I know that many nurses hesitate, both in loyalty to myself, and in self-protection, to register at the present time.

But the great principles underlying State Registration, for which nurses have worked for so long, are not touched by these things, if, in becoming members of a legally constituted Profession through State Registration, they realise their personal responsibility for supporting self-determination, and high ethical standards.

The Rules provide that the first Register shall be published as soon as possible after July 1st, 1922, and those nurses who desire to vote for their direct Representatives on the new Council must place their names on the Register not later than October next. But it must also be remembered that it is within the power of the Minister of Health to dissolve the Council at any time, when an election would have to take place.

As the Profession of Nursing emerges, and the registered are differentiated from the unregistered, I have visions of a Profession not only skilled and competent, but upright, public-spirited, courageous, and forceful. It only remains for future generations of well-educated Registered Nurses to use the privileges conferred upon them, with the aim of raising ever higher the standards of education and professional ethics, public usefulness and civic spirit of their members.

ETHEL G. FENWICK.

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