

# Royal British Nurses' Association.

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## LITERARY AND DEBATING SOCIETY.

### SEX EQUALITY.

Unfortunately Miss Drennan was unable to be present to propose her Resolution that "There should be Equality of the Sexes," and up to the hour of the meeting, owing to the vagaries of the British Postal system, her promised paper had not arrived. No one was present who had made any special study of the subject, but Miss Macdonald, in order to allow the debate to proceed, agreed to propose and speak to the Resolution. In commencing, she said that she had heard it stated, that day, that it was impossible for woman to be placed on the same platform with man owing to the fact that she was his inferior from an intellectual point of view. She could not agree that this was so. There were women, in history and in literature, who had shown a mental capacity equal to that of any man, and the reason why those examples were somewhat isolated was that women's environment and education had been such as to stultify, rather than encourage, her intellectual capacities. Indeed, from the point of view of creative thought, the speaker considered that women had shown themselves in advance of man if one took into consideration the limitations which it had been the habit to set upon their activities. It was contended that men were stronger physically and therefore should rule; but this was simply an argument for the barbarous principle that if A can kill B then A must govern B. Besides, if men were more able for heavy manual work, it could not be denied that, on the other hand, women had greater powers of endurance and perseverance, and these are what tell in the end.

The speaker next briefly referred to the need for reconsidering woman's position, on the lines of the Resolution before the meeting, owing to the extension of the franchise to women, and their consequent wider participation in public life. They should also have equal economic advantages, otherwise they could not have a fair field, because, deplorable though it may be, economics rule the world to-day, and there could not be a proper balance between the sexes without economic equality. Then there was the question of the children, peculiarly a subject calling for women's attentions. There was no doubt of the importance to the nation of proper organisation for fostering

the physical and moral well-being of the young. This was a matter of perhaps greater importance at the present time than at any other period of the nation's history, and unless women were placed on an equal footing with men they would not be in a position to press, with any prospects of success, for reforms and improvements necessary to the future progress of the coming generations.

Mrs. Glover, M.R.B.N.A., opposed the Resolution. She said that, as a principle, she was quite in favour of equality of the sexes, but women are not ready for it. In the first place they were too suspicious, too apt to distrust one another, and much too inclined to be disloyal to one another. She had noticed this particularly in England; women in the Colonies were much more broad-minded. Their heredity was not such as to fit women to be on an equality with men, and they were far too sensitive to criticism; this characteristic unfitted them to take the position the Resolution would give to them. In Mrs. Glover's opinion the disturbances on the General Nursing Council went to prove her contentions, all the bickerings and disputes went to show that women were not yet ready to be on an equality with the other sex; they could not manage their business without bitterness and continual contention.

Miss Forbes was opposed to equality of the sexes. In many ways women were superior to men: they had greater magnetism, understanding, tact, and intuition; but the man was stronger physically and had greater "force." She placed women on a higher plane in many respects, but she was not in favour of the Resolution for equality in national and economic life. Mrs. Ryder Richardson spoke in favour of the Resolution, and said that women had often clearer vision than men, and usually put a higher value on the spiritual aspect of things than men. Miss Crimmins considered that there were women who were on an equality with men, but, in her experience, they were very often intolerant and hard. Miss Rawlings considered that there was no question of equality—the one sex was the complement to the other. She strongly disagreed with Mrs. Glover's view that there was more disloyalty to one another among English-women than in the Dominions. She had been in most of the Colonies, and she considered women were much alike all the world over in this respect.

In replying, the proposer of the Resolution admitted Mrs. Glover's contention as to heredity

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