

# THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED  
THE NURSING RECORD

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No. 1,825.

SATURDAY, MARCH 24, 1923.

Vol. LXX

## EDITORIAL.

### THE STATE REGISTER OF NURSES.

A few days in a lifetime stand out as red-letter days, and for those who five-and-thirty years ago were present at the historic meeting in St. George's Hall, when the movement for State Registration of Nurses was publicly inaugurated, receiving the sympathetic support of a member of the Royal House—Princess Christian—the curt announcement by the Chairman of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, at its meeting on March 16th, that "the Register is out at last," made that date one to be remembered. For the red volume which caused no stir, or comment from the Members of that Council, incorporated in its pages, for those who had eyes to see, the earnestness of purpose, the sense of public duty, the self-denial, the expenditure in time and money, work, and life itself, which have been freely given by members of a poorly paid calling to obtain for it the "recognised position and legal constitution of a profession," so that those who follow them may have what they themselves so keenly desired. To the Old Guard the State Register represents the right given them by Act of Parliament to a prescribed training, to a one-portal examination, the power to protect their profession from the invasion of those who have never qualified to enter its ranks, and to protect the public from inefficient nurses.

Nothing could have demonstrated more clearly how little the present Council appreciate the true inwardness of the State Register than its attitude when the Chairman made that portentous announcement, and the fact that there is not even a passing reference to it in the Report of the Registration Committee.

The Chairman alluded to the bringing out of the first issue as "a work of extreme difficulty," and one visualised not the printed

page, or the difficulties connected with script and type, but the devotion of those who have gone before without seeing the work accomplished. Outstanding amongst them, of Isla Stewart, the Matron of the great hospital of St. Bartholomew, taking her stand alone of the Matrons of the large London Hospitals, undismayed and unafraid. Of our last picture of her leaving London with the inscribed draft of the first Bill of the Central Committee for the State Registration of Nurses in the hands which a few days later were folded in the peace of death. Of the gallant figure of Victor Horsley, writing from the sun-scorched plains of Mesopotamia: "Every day I wish more and more I could help on the good work." Of Louisa Stevenson, forceful and gracious, presiding at an annual meeting of the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses in its early days, giving expression to the faith that was in her: "I am perfectly certain, I am as sure as that the sun will rise to-morrow, that eventually for the whole of the British Empire will be established a State Register of Trained Nurses."

The utter absence of feeling—of emotion—on the part of the General Nursing Council struck chill, though one could not expect it from a Council of whom the majority had either taken no active part in the work on which the Register has been built up, or had actively opposed it. But if the Council had simultaneously risen and cheered, it would not have seemed out of place.

But though so many members of the Nursing Profession at the present time may seem devoid of public conscience, soulless seekers after place, power, and pelf, cruel in their instinctive antagonism to idealists with soul and conscience, we look into the future once more, and have faith that the State Registered Nurses of generations to come will re-capture the ideals which, enforced by earnest work, placed in their hands, as a trust, the State Register of Nurses.

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