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## EDITORIAL.

### LAW MAKERS AND LAW BREAKERS.

On January 8th, 1920, in the Rooms of the Medical Society of London, an historic meeting was held. The purpose was to rejoice over the passing of the Nurses' Registration Acts, and to give thanks to whom thanks were due, namely, Dr. Addison, then Minister of Health, and Major Barnett, M.P. We were full of high hopes and confidence that the powers and privileges granted to us would be realised, and that the General Nursing Council to be appointed would, with one heart and one mind, govern the Nursing Profession with impartiality and strict justice. That was our vision. The bitterest disillusionment has followed. A small minority of six alone were the faithful friends of the Nurses; the actions of the rest proved conclusively that they were the partisans of a certain Body of Nurses, and that impartial justice was not part of their code. With such a groundwork there could be no building up of the Profession; destruction has followed, not *construction*. We have watched with anxiety and amazement the many acts, and attempted acts, on the part of the majority of the former and of the present Council.

New Rules have been framed in order to give them power to govern with tyranny and autocracy. These words are not too strong, because there has been the clearest proof of such conduct: they have given themselves away again and again. The few who were single-minded have been ignored and insulted, until they were successfully hunted out of the Council; thereafter things have become steadily worse. The true friends of the Nurses on the present Council are so few that they are unable to accomplish much. The most serious consequence is that there is—there *must* inevitably be—a total absence of any sense of security, because the Act itself is violated whenever this is found convenient. Those of us who were in the House of Commons on March 22nd, 1922, cannot forget the disgraceful sight of a Cabinet Minister (Sir Alfred Mond) making a feeble attempt to justify himself in respect of the violation of the Act on that occa-

sion (*re* the Scottish Council not being consulted, &c.). Fifteen months later—namely, June 13th, 1923—we have another instance of law-breaking. The Act lays it down definitely that an applicant for admission to the State Register "*must prove to the satisfaction of the Council*" that he or she is so entitled. In this case the law-breakers are certain members of the Parliamentary Medical Committee, who, *without the approval of the General Nursing Council*, and for reasons of the most glaring partiality, have lowered still further the prestige of our beloved profession.

We would remind M.P.s and the General Nursing Council, and the College of Nursing Co., Ltd. (the Body who were the originators of this last damaging proposal), that our highest principle in demanding State Registration was, from the first: (1) *The protection of the Sick Public*; (2) *To safeguard trained certificated Nurses*. That is the theory: in practice it is precisely the opposite. All the sentiment and sympathy goes to the untrained women, and none at all to the trained. While the sick are totally unprotected, and trained Nurses, who in their thousands have registered, under the false contract of protection, are of no account. Now it is quite obvious that if Acts of Parliament can be violated with impunity in one case they can be in others, therefore they are not worth the paper they are printed upon; and if this process were carried to its logical conclusion there would follow unmitigated anarchy. We have at the present time this anomalous position: law makers and administrators can and do become law breakers; this is no exaggeration, and it is a very serious and dangerous position indeed. In conclusion, we would ask, Where were the three women M.P.s on the night of June 13th? They owe their position largely to the votes of women, and yet desert their own sex when they most need their help. Strong speeches from them showing the trained Nurses' point of view might have turned the scale and given a balance of justice. Is this how they are going to treat the interests of the sick and suffering?

BEATRICE KENT.

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