

MARGARET BREAY, S.R.N.

There have been uncanonised saints in all ages, and those of us privileged to live in daily companionship with Margaret Breay realise that for the past thirty years one has been pursuing her beneficent activities in nursing ranks, accomplishing for our profession throughout the world inestimable and lasting good through her life of selfless devotion in the service of humanity.

No other nurse with whom I have been associated during my fifty years' professional and public service—and in this half century I have come into touch with many nursing pioneers in many lands—has rendered quite the same altruistic service to our profession at large as Margaret Breay, because none of them have been tried in the same fiery furnace, and come through in such shining raiment.

To glance back at the beginning. How generous her fairy god-mother!

"This babe," she decreed, waving her magic wand, "shall be richly endowed—she will need all the graces. In character she shall be generous and courageous and noble. Not only shall she be richly endowed with these greatest of virtues, but temperamentally she shall be gentle, tenacious, serene. Her intellectual gifts shall be of the finest quality, and above all she shall be pure of heart, and love truth and ensue it."

What wonder, then, that come to woman's estate in the "eighties," Trained Nursing then in its early period of evolution, should have attracted so suitable a recruit, and that the ceaseless endeavour of such a personality should have accomplished extraordinary results in the uplift of professional nursing throughout the world, and shed radiant lustre on our profession, and on our sex.

To record the life's work of Margaret Breay, the great example she has been, the beneficent influence she has exercised, through her unceasing toil, would require a veritable tome, and cannot be here set down.

Her colleagues may find much of her ceaseless vigilance recorded by her tireless pen in the bound volumes of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING, of which, for thirty years, she has been assistant editor, and they will readily recognise her monumental service in this connection, from the high literary quality of her writings, in the appeal for the legal status of trained nurses in

Britain—a reform now accomplished by Act of Parliament, in which she played a most honourable and conquering part.

From first to last the service to her profession and the public has been voluntary, a gift anyway, for which no reward, excepting appreciation and gratitude would be adequate.

In the halcyon days of the last century hospital matrons could pick and choose their probationers from highly-educated gentlewomen, and, of course, when Matron of "Barts," I pounced upon Margaret Breay when she made her personal application for training. Here was the stuff of which realities, not dreams, are made. Dignity, courtesy, modesty, a peeping sense of fun, beseeching seal's eyes, an enticing smile, and a soothing voice. We soon came to terms, but it was not until several years later, after training and a

distinguished career at home and abroad, that I secured her invaluable help and co-operation in the great work for the organisation of Nursing Education and Registration by the State in Great Britain and Ireland, a now historic struggle in which she fought fair and fearlessly, and also in organising, together with our colleagues overseas in many lands, the world-wide Federation of Nurses, the International Council of Nurses, of which she has been the

thrifty and skilled financier as Hon. Treasurer for the past twenty-one years.

ETHEL G. FENWICK.

Margaret Breay entered St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, for training, in May, 1885, gaining the prize of books given by the Clothworkers Company at the end of her first year. In 1888 she obtained the certificate of the School, and after doing holiday duty for the Sister-in-Charge of the Trained Nurses Institution, and elsewhere, she was appointed Sister at the Metropolitan Hospital, Kingsland Road, London, for the nursing of which St. John's House, Norfolk Street, Strand, W.C., was then responsible. At the end of a year she received midwifery training at the St. John's Maternity Home, Battersea, and on obtaining the Diploma of the London Obstetrical Society, remained on as Superintendent of the Training School, and of the indoor and outdoor departments. In October, 1891, she returned to the Metropolitan Hospital as Matron, when Sister Dorothea of All Saints, resumed the position of Superior at Headquarters in Norfolk Street, Strand.



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Hon. Treasurer, International Council of Nurses.

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