

The year 1914 brought the War, and the introduction of private members' Bills was debarred by the new procedure in the House of Commons. Our profession, patriotic to the core, placed itself at the disposal of the sick and wounded at home and abroad, and it was not till after the Armistice when the Central Committee for the State Registration of Nurses, which had the most valuable help of the British Medical Association—after interminable negotiations with the College of Nursing, Limited, in connection with its rival Bill, decided to abide by the fundamental principles incorporated in its own Bill—to provide for an independent Governing Body and a Central Examination after three years' hospital training—that we had the extraordinary good fortune to secure the invaluable services of Major Barnett, who introduced our Bill into the House of Commons on March 18th, 1919, a red letter day for future generations of nurses.

Major Barnett's supreme services in the House of Commons are of such recent date that they are well within the memory of the present company, many of whom listened in the House of Commons to his splendid advocacy of our claims. Specially would I mention his loyalty, chivalry and honourable conduct in support of the Bill he had introduced, in direct contradistinction of the methods employed by the supporters of a rival Measure, whose heartless opposition was designed to wreck the Bill a national disaster so far as the status of Nurses and the health of the nation was concerned—had not the then Minister of Health come to the Table in the House of Commons, and saved the situation by promising to introduce on behalf of the Government, a Nurses' Registration Bill at the earliest possible date.

We claim that we largely owe this pledge to the powerful advocacy of Major Barnett in piloting our Bill through the various stages in the House of Commons with so much wisdom as to convince the whole House of its national importance. The result of this pledge was that a few months later—on Tuesday, December 23rd, 1919, the Royal Assent was given to the three Nurses' Registration Bills for England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland, conferring Legal Status on the Nurses of the United Kingdom, and raising Nursing into a legally constituted Profession, upon which happy consummation we heartily congratulate Major Barnett and the Nurses of the Empire." (Loud applause.)

Presentation of the Register.

Turning to Major Barnett, Mrs. Fenwick said: "Major Barnett, may it please you to receive from grateful Registered Nurses, a copy of the Register of Nurses in which their names and qualifications are inscribed, and in which we have had inserted the following short Address to you, with deepest and heartfelt thanks for what you have accomplished for nurses and the country."

The Address.

THIS COPY OF THE
REGISTER OF NURSES FOR ENGLAND AND WALES
IS PRESENTED TO
MAJOR R. W. BARNETT, M.P.,

BY SOME OF HIS FRIENDS IN THE NURSING PROFESSION IN RECOGNITION OF HIS GENEROUS ACTION IN INTRODUCING THE NURSES' REGISTRATION BILL DRAFTED BY THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE FOR THE STATE REGISTRATION OF NURSES, INTO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON MARCH 18TH, 1919, WHEN HIS GOOD FORTUNE IN THE BALLOT PLACED THIS OPPORTUNITY AT HIS DISPOSAL. HE THUS GAVE TRAINED NURSES THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROMOTE LEGISLATION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, FOR WHICH THEY HAD BEEN WAITING AND WORKING FOR 15 YEARS FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE SICK, AND FOR THE ORGANISATION OF NURSING AS A PROFESSION. THEY SOUGHT TO ATTAIN THESE ENDS, FIRSTLY BY THE ENFORCEMENT OF A PRESCRIBED STANDARD OF TRAINING, AND THE CERTIFICATION, AFTER EXAMINATION AND REGISTRATION,

UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE STATE, OF THOSE NURSES WHO HAD ATTAINED THAT STANDARD.

SECONDLY, BY PLACING IN THE HANDS OF TRAINED NURSES AN INSTRUMENT ENABLING THEM TO PROTECT THE HONOUR AND THE INTERESTS OF THEIR PROFESSION, AND THE RIGHT TO WEAR A PROTECTED UNIFORM AND BADGE.

NURSES DESIRE HEREBY TO EXPRESS THEIR GRATITUDE TO MAJOR BARNETT FOR THE MASTERLY WAY IN WHICH HE PRESENTED THE CASE FOR THEIR REGISTRATION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, ON THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL IN THAT HOUSE, ON MARCH 28TH, 1919, SO THAT IT RECEIVED SUPPORT ON ALL SIDES OF THE HOUSE, AND PASSED THE SECOND READING WITHOUT A DIVISION, AND FURTHER PILOTTED IT THROUGH THE STANDING COMMITTEE WITH SUCH SUCCESS THAT THE THEN MINISTER OF HEALTH (THE RIGHT HONBLE. CHRISTOPHER ADDISON, M.P., P.C.) ANNOUNCED ON THE REPORT STAGE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD INTRODUCE A NURSES' REGISTRATION BILL AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE DATE. DR. ADDISON GAVE EFFECT TO THAT PLEDGE IN THE SUBSEQUENT AUTUMN SESSION WITH THE RESULT THAT BILLS FOR THE REGISTRATION OF NURSES IN ENGLAND AND WALES, SCOTLAND AND IRELAND RECEIVED THE ROYAL ASSENT ON DECEMBER 23RD, 1919, THUS CONSTITUTING TRAINED NURSING AS A LEGALISED PROFESSION.

FEBRUARY 5TH, 1925.

Mrs. Fenwick then handed to Major Barnett the inscribed copy of the Register amidst loud and continued applause.

The picture which appears on page 51 is an unexpected snapshot taken at this moment.

The Toast Master.

Ladies and Gentlemen, "pray silence" for Miss H. L. Pearse, S.R.N., President of the L.C.C. Nurses' Social Union.

Miss H. L. Pearse, S.R.N.

Miss Pearse said: Madam Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen:—

I am delighted to add my voice in recognition of the services, courageous and persistent, rendered by Major Barnett in the passing of the Nurses' Registration Act, in the promotion of which his experience as a famous chess player is no doubt accountable in no small degree for the strategic skill with which he conducted the campaign.

The immense benefit to the Nursing Profession has only made a beginning, but when I look back to the time when I was Matron of a General Hospital and in charge of the training of Probationers and think of the difficulty there was in maintaining a high standard of teaching and examination, I almost envy those of the present time with a State Examination to prepare for, a definite programme of teaching and training to be followed. Matrons must be greatly assisted in making their choice of candidates. It would be no good taking any girl below a certain standard of education and intelligence.

Now consider the value to the Probationer. No more go as you please, study or not! There is plenty of time! No—the Probationer must take her training seriously from the beginning.

The reputation of her Hospital is in her hands—and she must prepare herself to compete not merely with her own Hospital companions but with Nurses from hundreds of other Institutions; and her training school will be ashamed should she fail to pass so reasonable a standard. Examiners, moreover, are aloof persons from other spheres who will not be inclined to be lenient through a friendliness to their own Hospital.

I have always recognised the great benefit there would be from this wide competition of candidates from all sorts of Institutions.

And then the Sister-Tutor. What a delightful appointment for many a harassed Matron who could never give the time to teaching of Probationers which she knew they required.

A charming post, too, for any Sister whose strength is in teaching rather than in the practical details of ward management.

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