

# Royal British Nurses' Association.

Incorporated by



Royal Charter.

THIS SUPPLEMENT BEING THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE CORPORATION.

## ANNUAL MEETING.

By command of Her Royal Highness the President, the Annual General Meeting will be held at 194, Queen's Gate, Kensington, London, S.W.7, on Thursday, June 24th, at 3 p.m.

Her Royal Highness has graciously intimated her intention to preside.

## THE BRITISH COLLEGE OF NURSES.

### THE DIGNITY OF KNOWLEDGE.

Members of the Association, who have the progress of their profession truly at heart, must rejoice in the news, conveyed to us in the last issue of *THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING*. They must see in it opportunity for the higher evolution of nursing as a profession, opportunity for the nurses to prove whether or no they are yet capable of steering the good ship of their own profession. There is evidence in our correspondence that there are many who have seen visions and dreamed dreams when they read the Editorial of the May issue of *THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING*, many who have felt that here was another rung in the ladder to the right to a place among the professions. It is to be hoped, indeed, that nurses will rise to the occasion with the same spirit of selflessness that has prompted a most generous gift to them, with the same free, yet dignified and ethical, spirit which has, by the provisions of the gift, done all that is possible to ensure that the British College of Nurses will work in harmony with a Divine Guidance and with those same impulses, of love toward mankind, which brought trained nursing into being.

Experience has shown that, in the past, any movement towards the higher education of nurses has generally had to meet a whole crop of warnings against the dangers of over-educating nurses, whatever that may mean, and, curiously enough, we find this same fearfulness of knowledge emanating from some of the nurses themselves. Yet retrospect shows that it is the professions, the individuals, who, in the past, have braved knowledge, who made their mark on time, and left, with the world, enlightenment. The nursing profession has, up to the present at least, been able to put little of living spirit into its accumulation of knowledge; perhaps we have failed somewhat to feel the full significance of it, have tried to gain it from the point of view only of its utility, and the opportunities that it gives for service. These are great and important points of view, but we have never quite valued knowledge sufficiently in the recognition that it is, of itself, possessed of beauty, power, enlightenment, in the recognition that it altogether merits the great prestige with which scholars have surrounded it in the universities and colleges of other professions. By them "the dignity of knowledge" of which Lord Bacon, the "Father of Modern Science," spoke has been truly valued and, between the lines of *THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING*'s announcement to the profession, we can read a longing that the nurses may rise to a conception of the dignity of know-

ledge, that they will make, of their gift a centre of learning, where, seeking the guidance of the Divine Healer, they will guard and foster their treasures of knowledge, surrounding this, their Alma Mater, with the fine ceremonial, and the glamour of ancient custom, which has flowed from the inspiration of great minds throughout the ages.

From time to time we have heard nursing spoken of, with kindly, well-meant patronage, as the Cinderella of the Professions. Suddenly a fairy godmother, invisible as fairies are in these days, has flung wide open the gates of opportunity, and it remains with the nurses to stand upon their feet and prove that they are worthy of the great gift, and the great responsibility, now entrusted to them. There comes a time in the life of every profession, in the life of every individual when, if there is to be further development, they must cease to draw inspiration and strength from others. To a profession this time is longer in coming than to an individual. Aspiration, knowledge, thought have to percolate to the minds and consciousness of separate individuals before a corporate conscience and a corporate purpose can arise. In a profession its own Members, its own creators, we may say, must bestow upon it a soul in order that it may become an entity and function in the community.

From its more personal aspects we see in this new movement a tremendous encouragement to individual effort; inevitably, sooner or later, it must tend to bring into the foreground those who have had the ability and grit to strive towards high efficiency. *There is always room at the top*, and the impulse given by the establishment of the British College of Nurses must help to weed out tendencies, which undoubtedly sometimes exist, to give promotion on grounds of expediency rather than on high professional qualification. At the present time there is one recognised standard of efficiency and that a minimum one, so that there is indeed some excuse for the talk about luck and chance which we occasionally hear given as the determining factors in a nurse's career. That a minimum standard, such as that ensured by the Nurses' Registration Acts, is necessary is a fact beyond dispute; but, after all, as has been pointed out, this merely gives a sure foundation on which to build a greater edifice, nothing more though that is much. Now, unostentatiously, it may have been with many prayers for guidance in the responsibility which great wealth gives, one part of the material for further building of the profession has been supplied, the rest can come from one source only—the spirit and brain of the profession itself. New opportunities will arise for the development of branches of nursing work, in all directions, which have already come into being; but there are other developments, yet unthought of, in which nurses, having imagination, can become pioneers, can gather the fruits of their own efforts and their own capacities and, at the same time, extend the borders of their profession. Theirs alone is the opportunity, theirs alone the responsibility, theirs the prize if the race be well run.

"Deep gratitude to a munificent donor, and a firm determination to respond to and be worthy of the trust imposed

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)