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EDITED BY MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK, REGISTERED NURSE.

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## EDITORIAL.

### PRESTIGE.

The announcement made in our report of the January meeting of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, that this Council has unanimously elected a Registered Nurse (Miss E. M. Musson, R.R.C.), as its Chairman for the ensuing year, is one of momentous significance. For a profession which has not in the Chair of its Statutory Governing Body a member of that profession can have little or no prestige, the presumption in the public mind naturally being that it is composed of persons of inferior mentality, and devoid of ethical standards.

This we know was not the case in regard to Nursing, for when the Nurses' Registration Acts were placed upon the Statute Book in 1919 there were women of ripe business experience within the ranks of the newly-constituted profession, qualified by knowledge and personality to preside over its Governing Bodies; and had the Ministry of Health in this country taken the courageous course, and appointed a trained nurse as Chairman of the General Nursing Council it would now have been much more highly estimated by both Registered Nurses and the public.

But the echoes of the long protracted struggle for the Organization of Nursing, and the Registration of Nurses, had barely died away, and the Minister appointed a Chairman whom he probably considered neutral, a Chairman kindly, courteous, and considerate, whose legal knowledge was an asset to the Council, but who failed, as it was almost inevitable he should fail, when it became necessary to take a strong stand upon a matter of principle, of vital importance to the profession as a whole, concerning which he presumably did not understand the issues at stake.

In addition to the prestige of the profession there are other cogent reasons why a Registered Nurse should be the Chairman of its Governing Body. No one else can share and voice its aspirations, understand its difficulties, or generate in the Council Chamber an atmosphere in which the problems peculiar to nurses can be freely and adequately discussed—least of all under the chairmanship of a member of the profession of Medicine are nurses permitted to discuss their affairs with freedom. In relation to the treatment of the sick the medical profession is rightly paramount, but, outside the sick-room, when their standards of education, personal discipline

and professional ethics are concerned, nurses have a right to define their own standards.

Consider, for instance, the question of discipline. It is the right of nurses, as of medical practitioners, to be judged by their peers.

Concerning educational qualifications the late Mrs. Hampton Robb, in her book on "Nursing Ethics," which deserves to be widely read, gives us a glimpse of what she considers the preliminary education of a woman for her life's work as a nurse should be. "She should be as one of the women of the Queen's Gardens in Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies*, or such an one as Olive Schreiner describes when she says 'A woman who does woman's work needs a many-sided, multiform culture; the heights and depths of human life must not be beyond her vision; she must have knowledge of men and things in many states, a wide catholicity of sympathy, the strength that springs from knowledge and the magnanimity that springs from strength,' only in so far as the women of our training schools attain to this standard will the institutions and communities in which they labour, feel and show forth the influence of that 'sweet ordering, arrangement and decision' that are woman's chief prerogatives."

In regard to Ethics this great leader of nurses writes: "As human beings become formed into societies, guilds or crafts, these, besides following the broad, general moral laws, adopt certain regulations which, morally, are binding upon each member, although they may have no legal weight. These moral laws are necessary for the honour, integrity, and the holding together of such societies, and for their higher development. Since, then, codes of ethics must exist for all men and for all ages, in considering them in connection with our own profession of nursing we do but follow in the footsteps of mankind in general. The rules of conduct adapted to the many diverse circumstances attending the nursing of the sick constitute *nursing ethics*."

"It is only by utilizing all the means at our disposal and by a steady application, which is ever seeking to add to our known resources others which are gradually being developed; above all, it is only by doing our work for the work's sake, that we can hope to obtain the best and the most far-reaching results, and that our chosen profession will stand out as a beacon, ever kept bright by the light of our choicest personal endeavours, that will cause it to shine with a penetrating and attractive light, towards which all, who when in physical and mental

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