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EDITORIAL.

A VOCATIONAL ASSOCIATION.

It was surely a touch of genius which made Mrs. Sidney Webb, President of the Afternoon Session of the Conference of Nursing and Kindred Organisations, convened by the Labour Party, and held at Caxton Hall on January 28th, as reported on page 42, suggest the substitution of the words "purely vocational" for "Trade Union."

The paragraph criticised occurs on page 23 of the Draft Report of the Labour Party, and is:—

"The only way in which nurses can deal effectively with their conditions, and exercise any sort of equality in bargaining power, is for the profession to be organised on Trade Union lines."

There is no doubt that many devoted nurses are not attracted by the proposal of organisation on Trade Union lines, fearing that principles which may be useful in the organisation of those engaged in industry will not prove suited to those dealing with suffering humanity.

What is needed is clear thinking, and, when we consider the words offered for our acceptance by Mrs. Sidney Webb, we realise that most of the trouble arising in the organisation of nurses in the past has been because they have not been organised on purely vocational lines, that is, that our professional associations have not been composed exclusively of members of our own profession, and the inclusion of other elements has sooner or later proved the inherent weakness of the structure, and has even, perhaps, caused its disintegration and downfall.

The British College of Nurses is organised on purely vocational lines, as membership is restricted to State Registered Nurses. By the generosity of an anonymous benefactor it has the funds with which to further its work free from any conditions and restrictions. As a vocational Association it stands for government of the profession by the profession, and places unity and solidarity within the grasp of all. It welcomes every trained and Registered Nurse who will come along and help, and through it British Nurses may be welded into an Association forceful, and indeed well nigh omnipotent, which when it speaks must be listened to, because it speaks in the name of a united profession, and which while maintaining the highest ideals will also promote the material benefit of its Fellows and Members.

The work of the first six months of the College Council proves that the foundations are being well and truly laid, and individual nurses have, already in several instances, found the advantage of membership.

A SACRED OBLIGATION.

The President and Members of the Council of the British College of Nurses have been much struck, and greatly encouraged, by the manifest joy expressed by so many of the Fellows and Members who have called at the temporary Office at 431, Oxford Street, London, W., that at last they have a College of their own, through which they can freely express their views, and work together for the uplift of their Profession, and by the readiness they have expressed to do anything within their power to promote its success. The spirit of self-help, without which no real progress can be made, seems to dominate their outlook, and is the best augury for the success of the British College of Nurses.

"Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control, these three alike lead life to sovereign power," and it will be the aim of the College to encourage the development of these qualities by its Fellows and Members, who will thus act as centres for their diffusion, for, if sympathetically placed before her, the Student-Nurse will respond to teaching on these lines.

Nursing is, indeed, a sacred calling, for a nurse has to deal not with mechanical things, but with sick bodies, and often with bruised souls and broken spirits. Her touch must be very sure, her outlook very tolerant, her attitude very tender. She needs—she alone knows how much—the spirit of wisdom and understanding, and a right judgment in all things.

A nurse is wise if she makes books her companions—choosing them as she would choose her friends, and travel her recreation, for nothing keeps the mind more alert or gives greater breadth of vision.

In the practice of their profession nurses secure a means of livelihood, and it is right that their highly skilled and scientific work should be adequately remunerated.

But to be a true nurse involves much more than this. Nursing is a sacred trust for which its standard bearers cannot claim too high a position.

The Nurses of to-day have before them the example and inspiration of holy, devoted and self-sacrificing predecessors. In the light of modern knowledge our methods have improved, but it is impossible to excel them in their aspirations and ideals. The British College of Nurses may well emulate their devotion while holding high the standard of modern nursing practice

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