

Letter from Mr. W. Patrick Spens, O.B.E., K.C.

Dear Mr. Hopkins,

You can guess how disappointed I am that temporary indisposition keeps me from attending and speaking at the meeting this afternoon. Please express my regrets and apologies to the meeting.

I look forward to reading a full report of the speeches and discussion, and I am sure that it will only add to the interest which I feel and have felt for so many years in everything connected with the profession of Nursing.

Yours very sincerely,

W. P. SPENS.

248, St. James' Court,
Buckingham Gate, S.W.1.

Mr. Hopkins said that he, as well as the Nursing Profession, owed a debt of gratitude to Sir Richard Barnett. He judged that it was quite possible for the profession with the interest it had now got to press forward any claim it desired to make, and reminded those present that the time of a General Election was a good time to mention it.

He thought it hardly necessary to mention that Mr. Alfred Beit was likely to prove a good friend to Nurses as his father before him, who was respected wherever medical science was appreciated. The last evidence of interest in the hospital world shown by Sir Otto Beit was to give £50,000 to provide Radium for the London Hospitals.

In Mr. Spens they had a skilled advocate, who had a record of distinguished war service and who had made a great name at the Bar.

He would like to congratulate the British College of Nurses on getting together, and expressed the hope that it would increase in numbers, influence, and prosperity. He was sure he might take from the meeting to Sir Richard Barnett, its sincere good wishes for his speedy recovery, and might also ask Mrs. Spens to convey the same to Mr. Spens. (Applause.)

A Few Words from Mrs. Spens.

Mrs. Spens expressed the great regret of her husband at his absence, but as he wanted to get well he was obliged to abide by his doctor's decision. Should he be returned to Parliament he would be most pleased to serve the nurses.

MISS ISABEL MACDONALD'S SPEECH.

The speaker of the afternoon was Miss Isabel Macdonald, F.B.C.N., Member of the Council of the British College of Nurses, who spoke as follows:—

Mr. Hopkins, ladies and gentlemen, I think I am the person most to be pitied in this Hall to-day. I had regarded myself as a casual item among the speakers, and now, to our sorrow, we find that Sir Richard Barnett and Mr. Spens, who I know were the people you all really came to listen to, cannot be with us. It is with mixed feelings in any case, that I come to this platform, because this meeting marks, in a certain sense, to the Nursing Profession the retirement of Sir Richard Barnett from the House of Commons. We know that wherever there is progress there must be movement and there must be change, but changes such as this we do not like, for I am sure that all my colleagues here will agree that Sir Richard Barnett is the best friend the nurses ever had in the House of Commons. I will recapitulate shortly, for the benefit of some of the younger nurses, the story of how he came to take up the nurses' cause. In the General Election of 1919, Sir Richard wrote to a nurse in his constituency asking for her support, and this nurse (Miss Beatrice Kent) happens to be a lady whose mind is always occupied with live questions, and so she promptly wrote to Sir Richard, and asked whether, if he were returned to

Parliament, he would be prepared to support the Nurses' Registration Bill; he replied that he had studied the Bill, and was ready to give it all the help that lay in his power.

At the request of the Central Committee for the State Registration of Nurses he also consented to back the Bill, and in the event of his securing a place in the Ballot to use the opportunity to promote the Nurses' Registration Bill.

It is old history how Captain Barnett—as he was then—drew a place in the Ballot, and redeemed his promise by introducing the Nurses' Registration Bill, and giving notice that he would move its Second Reading in the House of Commons on March 28th. Members of Parliament came to ask him to use his good fortune to further one political question or another, and very disgusted they were when he told them he intended to make use of his great opportunity for the benefit of people so unimportant as the nurses!

To put the matter shortly, Sir Richard used his opportunity to such purpose that the Nurses' Registration Acts were, through his efforts, ultimately placed on the Statute Book. Such is the history of Sir Richard's election pledge to the Nurses, a pledge which, you will all agree, *he kept up to the hilt*. He it was who turned a "live question," of thirty years' standing, into a living affirmative; he transformed the idea of Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, the great demand, the impulse which she bore for her time for the nursing world, into the living organism that is functioning in the profession now, and, although the Act in this country is not all we would have desired, although it is not functioning always in the way we would like to see it do, it marks a great step in the evolution of Nursing and inevitably does, and will, bring to the sick and to the Nurses great benefits in the future. I would again therefore express something of our gratitude for the kindness and sympathy of Sir Richard Barnett.

The Great Live Question at the Present Moment.

And now I would like to put forward, for your consideration, some points in connection with the subject before us this afternoon. Of course the great "live question" at the present moment is the proposal of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association that its Examination should be recognised as an entrance to the State Register of Nurses trained in the Nursing of Mental Diseases. *This, ladies and gentlemen, is a direct blow at the one portal system of Registration.* Now, for the benefit of some of those who have not been in close touch with the Registration Movement, perhaps I had better explain what we mean by the one portal system. Shortly, it means that the same treatment is meted out to all nurses entering the Register, that each nurse has to sit for the State Examination, in her special part of the Register, before she can be registered, and that no other examination, or means of entrance to the State Register, is permitted. Now this one portal system of Registration has been a principle from which the promoters of the Registration movement have never deviated since the inception of that movement; and it is up to the Nurses to see to it that they press their views on every possible occasion, and use all the influence they possess to protect the purity of their Register in this particular at this juncture.

The suggestion of the R.M.P.A. is essentially dangerous because, if adopted, it will form a precedent, and if the demand is acceded to, it will inevitably happen that, in the course of a few decades or so, one voluntary organisation after another will feel justified in coming forward and claiming that its examination shall be recognised as qualifying for the General Register or perhaps one or other of the Supplementary Registers, as circumstances may dictate. If the one portal system is sacrificed in

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