

their professional aspirations within their grasp, when you drew that lucky number and found yourself in a position to redeem your promise—which you did with all the kindness in the world. In this connection may I read a letter sent by me to our devoted Miss Breay, who had been injured in a motor accident, as it expressed the ecstatic delight of the moment.

Central Committee for State Registration of Nurses,
431, Oxford Street, London, W.1.

17th March, 1919.

Glorioso!

Captain Barnett has drawn fourth place in the ballot, and has given it to *our* Bill! Isn't it perfectly splendid? I lunch with him at House to-morrow, to make plans. He must bring it in this Friday or Friday next week. I hope next week, to give us time to lobby. . . . You will have to be well enough to be in House on 28th, if you tie your head up in a bag. We are all going to lobby like demons so get Lily to tackle Wolmer, but not too soon, for fear he goes against us; but we must win after all these years—fourteen years since Bill was introduced. *B.J.N.* will be tasty this week. I sat down after doing *B.J.N.* last night and wrote to Barnett (it seems like Ampthill over again), begging him if he won in the ballot to give us his victory. There were 186 members balloting, so it was nearly 200 chances to one.

"Stars in their courses." We are going to win.

MATRONA.

On this happy occasion it is neither the time nor the place to refer to the ignoble political tactics, which might have cost trained nurses and the public such a valuable reform as the organisation of the Nursing Profession by the State; suffice it to say that owing to your devotion to our cause—and the incomparable skill with which you advocated it in Parliament—the Government of the day were compelled to adopt your policy, and the Nurses Registration Acts, for England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland, were placed on the Statute Book of this Realm on December 23rd, 1919.

Legislation has accomplished much—though not all we desire—in defining educational standards for nurses, and protecting their professional status.

We have to thank you that for the following nine years, in which you were a Member of Parliament, you kept in touch with the progressive section of the Nursing Profession, and in many emergencies protected their interests and incidentally, those of the public, and your well-earned title of the "Nurses' Champion" will ever be associated with your name. Alas! in the new Parliament no one has had the courage to assume the rôle.

As you will see we have placed the portrait of "Our Champion" opposite the door of the Members' Club Room of our College, so that all your old friends who enter may feel the happier for meeting you face to face and the Registered Nurses of the younger generation who have not had the pleasure of working with you will learn of the deep debt of gratitude they owe to you for your incomparable services to the Nursing Profession at large.

Under the portrait are inscribed the words:—

MAJOR SIR RICHARD BARNETT,

Member of Parliament for St. Pancras, 1916-1929.

The constant Champion in the House of Commons of the Nurses of Great Britain and Ireland, who largely owe to him their Professional Status.

In the name of the British College of Nurses, I accept the life-like portrait of Sir Richard Barnett with very sincere pleasure, and beg to offer heartfelt thanks to our colleague, Miss Edith Pelham Williams, for her invaluable gift.

The President then called upon Miss Beatrice Kent, to supplement the vote of thanks.

Speech of Miss Beatrice Kent.

More than 100 years ago, Samuel Rogers, the banker-poet, wrote a poem entitled, "The Pleasures of Memory." It must have been an inspiring work, because it ran through many editions. I am forcibly reminded of this at the present time in connection with certain pleasurable memories of my own.

(1) The first was the day when I ventured to write to Sir Richard Barnett to ask him to call upon me. I was then living in his constituency, in the same street in fact, he at one end of the street and I at the other.

He was kind enough to come, and I unfolded to him my purpose. You know the rest—Sir Richard Barnett *promised*, and *Sir Richard Barnett kept his promise*.

To those of us who know him, it is not surprising that he kept his promise; but I should like to emphasize this, because we know that some people do not keep their promises, and we also know—because Sir Richard has told us—that some of his colleagues in the House of Commons were quite surprised that he intended to keep his promise to the Nurses!

"(He) never turned his back, but marched breast forward, never doubted clouds would break."

And they *did* break.

(2) My next pleasurable memory in this connection was a *scene in the House of Lords*. Several of us were fortunate enough to be allowed there. There were the five Lords Commissioners—representing the King—sitting all in a row, *very* silent and *very* serious, arrayed in gorgeous robes, looking like living statuary, or kings out of a pack of cards; and there was the Clerk, also wearing symbolical raiment, stating in clear tones the name of the Bill, and then—bowing profoundly to the five Lords before him, who solemnly returned the bow—he uttered the pregnant words in the quaint old French, "*Le Roi le veut*."

I remember that there were forty-five Bills to receive the Royal Assent on that day, and in the order of the list ours came very near the *Rats and Mice Bill*! Should you think me very fanciful if I suggest that it was not altogether inappropriate, because you know we *had* been nibbled at a good deal in the course of the years.

I seem to hear the echo of that little procession now, as it made its way from the House of Lords to the House of Commons, preceded by two policemen with their hats off (the only time when you see policemen with their hats off), and headed by Black Rod; and then, the much larger recession, with the Speaker and his attendants, the Clerks, and at least fifteen members of the House of Commons, as they returned to the House of Lords to hear the Royal Assent given. I seem to hear the words—uttered in sonorous tones—"Hats off strangers."

Sir Richard Barnett is no stranger to us, nor we to him. There is a debt that no one desires to cancel, so we say "Hats off" to Sir Richard, and the debt remains uncanceled.

The Help of the Medical Profession.

Dr. Bedford Fenwick, said: "I have been asked to say a few words about the great help given by a section of the medical profession to the Nurses when they were working to obtain State Registration. In 1902 the doctors began to play their part in the endeavour to obtain the appointment of a Select Committee of the House of Commons to enquire into the Nursing Question. Exercising their influence all over the country they succeeded in obtaining promises from 400 Members of Parliament that they would support a request for the appointment of a Select Committee. It was a request no Government could withstand, and Lord

previous page

next page