

# Royal British Nurses' Association.

Incorporated by



Royal Charter.

THIS SUPPLEMENT BEING THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE CORPORATION.

## ROYAL APPRECIATION.

Miss Louisa Hill and Miss Mary Watson, Members of the Royal British Nurses' Association's Co-operation (who had the honour of nursing Her Late Royal Highness the Princess Royal) received, a few days ago, the gracious commands of Her Royal Highness Princess Arthur of Connaught, R.R.C., S.R.N., to call at her house. The Princess, after expressing her appreciation of their professional services to her mother, handed to the nurses brooches, gifts from His Majesty the King, who had had those specially designed and made. Along with them the nurses received photographs of her late Royal Highness, a trinket box and instrument case as mementoes of their work for the late Princess Royal. The brooches were of red and white enamel on gold, one of them having small diamonds inset, and they took the form of a beautifully designed monogram of the letters G.R. surmounted by the Royal Crown in crimson enamel and gold. Her Royal Highness informed the nurses that His Majesty had given special attention to the design in order that the brooches might be worn with their uniform. The Council of the Association chanced to meet just after the nurses had received these gifts and they expressed sincere appreciation of the gracious kindness of His Majesty the King and Her Royal Highness the President in thus recognising the value of the professional services of two exceedingly efficient Registered Nurses.

## THE NURSING PROFESSION (HOURS AND WAGES) BILL.

The Nursing Profession (Hours and Wages) Bill continues to evoke many expressions of opinion, but discussions on it are too often narrowed down to terms of economics and hours alone. The fact that disharmony and confusion must arise, if a profession—and such a profession as nursing—is to be driven into conditions that rule in industry, seems to assume quite a secondary place, and yet it is an aspect which must be considered, in all seriousness, if the welfare of the sick and the interests of the nurses are not to be very adversely affected. And, indeed, the matter does not end with such considerations, there are ethical points as well which those, who have the progress of their profession genuinely at heart, will not be inclined to discount.

In reading the Bill, and in listening to various conversations upon it, we are irresistibly reminded of the attitude of many of the earliest and best of the pioneers for the reform of the Profession of Medicine who lived, laboured and agitated some three or four hundred years ago. We find that they constantly refer to the practice of medicine as an "art," and we are struck by the reverence and

respect with which those old reformers approached that art and their determination to protect it from "such as practise it unskillfully." They regarded their art as something which, through sagacity and constant exertion, they had torn out of the darkness of ignorance, and, as it were, created; and with their minds full of the conviction that the light of knowledge which they had acquired gave to *them* the responsibility for the management of their profession they claimed that they alone knew what was required for the healthy development of the art of medicine. "Hands off" was always the attitude of Maister Peter Lowe, for instance, towards those who meddled unjustifiably, and he founded the Royal Faculty of Medicine and Surgery in such a way as to foreshadow the absolute independence and self-government of the medical profession. We can imagine what a volcano he would have become had some Member of Parliament sought to set limits to his activities in his "art." And the fire which he and others lit still burns, that fire of the spirit which has led medical men to an ever-increasing enthusiasm for their art and for high attainment in it, a fire of the spirit which has, for many a decade now, served to warn off meddlers. And if the profession—if the art of nursing—is to go on and progress, the same spirit must arise in the nurses—a spirit of enthusiasm for nursing for its own sake and not alone for its commercial value as the means of earning a livelihood, and that without risk of over-exertion.

Nursing, at its best, has, in a wide sense, a right to be regarded as an art just as medicine has and, therefore, while demanding constructive legislation, it must guard against any which will prove restrictive and in certain aspects (as in the case of the proposed legislation) actually destructive; if the profession lets itself become entangled in the meshes of a legislation which leaves no branch of the profession free to work when and how long it will, the whole of the nurses will be caught like silly sheep in a creeping underwood, senselessly deprived of their full freedom. This Bill does not so much as glimpse the professional aspects of nursing, and Members of Parliament must be impressed somehow with the understanding that the nurses see in sickness, suffering and death things that cannot be brought to terms with an eight hours' day, things that will make a stronger appeal to the nurses than Acts of Parliament calculated to rigidly regulate their hours.

It is true that the willingness of the nurses to give of their best has all too often been exploited to an extent that made the swing of the pendulum in the opposite direction an inevitable consequence and so, in an incident such as the introduction of this Bill, they must see to it that they consider the question on broad lines. It is the old story of finding the balance, of approaching all questions with organised, harmonised reasoning as the ancient philosophers expressed it. And such reasoning must

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