

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD

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No. 1,950. Vol. 79.

JANUARY, 1931.

Price Sevenpence

EDITORIAL.

A LAUDABLE CUSTOM.

With the advent of the New Year it is a laudable custom to make good resolutions, and in this connection we wish to impress upon our colleagues that now they are the registered members of a Profession it is their duty to make the weight of its influence felt. At present this is not the case. We may give as instances that when the Departmental Committee on Maternal Mortality and Morbidity was appointed in June, 1928, by Mr. Neville Chamberlain, then Minister of Health, no nurse-midwife was nominated to a seat upon it. Neither was any Registered Nurse nominated to a seat on the Departmental Committee, appointed at the same time, to consider the working of the Midwives Acts 1902 to 1926, and when this fundamental omission was pointed out representation was refused.

Members of the Nursing Profession, collectively and individually, should therefore urge their right to participate in such public duties for the national benefit.

THE IMPORTANCE OF VIGILANCE IN WATCHING PROJECTED LEGISLATION.

Next it is the duty of nurses as a Profession to be vigilant in watching all projected legislation which may affect them, and through them the public. At the present moment, for instance, they should be wide awake as to any action which may be taken by the Medico-Psychological Association—a powerful body of mental specialists—to have the examination of mental nurses which they conduct, recognised as qualifying for admission to the Supplementary Part of the State Register for Mental Nurses, a Statutory duty for which the General Nursing Council for England and Wales is responsible under the Nurses Registration Act.

A Bill at present before Parliament intimately affecting the Nursing Profession is that introduced into the House of Commons by Mr. A. Fenner Brockway (Leyton, E. Lab.) laying down minimum wages and maximum working hours for nurses, and practically degrading Nursing from a profession to the level of a trade. It is proposed that the Bill shall apply to nurses employed in hospitals and institutions, and to district nurses.

It is suggested that the salary of a probationer shall begin at £40 per annum (this in addition to board, lodging and washing).

It should be realised and emphasised that probationer nurses are receiving a valuable education

to qualify them for a profession, and that the rewards of this education, financial and otherwise, come later. These points should be noted by Registered Nurses who should endeavour to inform members of Parliament and the public concerning them.

THE CRUCIAL QUESTION OF THE MOMENT.

But the crucial question of the moment is the economic condition of private nursing.

There is a certain limited amount of private nursing which should be available for independent Registered Nurses and the fee which by common consent is considered adequate for their services is from £3 13s. 6d. to £4 4s. a week. But this is being depreciated on all sides.

Very serious is the widespread employment of nurses by unscrupulous persons for financial gain. Agencies, licensed in London by the London County Council, and therefore inspiring the public with confidence, are sending out women to nurse the sick, both in institutions and private families, who for various reasons have failed to attain the status of a registered nurse. The fee charged for their services is frankly anything the agency can obtain.

Another question which arises in this connection is that the London County Council which, at the present crisis, requires some five hundred nurses, frequently obtains them from these agencies, paying a fee upon which qualified nurses cannot exist. We have some sympathy with the London County Council which has recently taken over the management of so large a number of hospitals, but the question will not be solved by employing inefficient nurses, but by making the conditions of training attractive to educated girls, and securing to them when trained an adequate fee. As a public department it is the duty of the London County Council to do all in its power to prevent the depreciation of the status and remuneration of the Registered Nurse.

AN IMPORTANT PUBLIC DUTY.

Lastly we wish to urge upon nurses as a fundamental and important duty that they should take an interest in the work of their professional associations. Generous as they are to one another in times of distress, and eagerly as they enjoy social amenities, there is a terrible apathy of nurses towards the organisation of their own profession. We hope that one of the good resolutions of many nurses for the coming year will be that they will take an increased interest in their professional organisations and public duties.

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