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EDITORIAL.

THE JOY AND ADVENTURE OF ENERGETIC SERVICE.

"There are too many drones as yet in our hive, there is too great a waste of that human material which, especially at the present juncture, would be invaluable to the country if adequately educated to the joy and adventure of energetic service."—LORD BADEN-POWELL.

When in 1929 we were invited to give the Watchword to the International Council of Nurses for the quadrennial period which ends in Paris in July next we chose for the working motto of the Council the word "Service" as linking together those which, in turn, had served to unite its members in a common endeavour—Work—Courage—Life—Aspiration. It now remains for each one to decide how far she has put that Watchword into practice.

The opportunities have been manifold, embracing not only service to the Nursing Profession, but through it to humanity, and it must ever be remembered that opportunity carries with it corresponding duties.

Lord Baden-Powell in his recent book—"Lessons from the 'Varsity of Life"—a book which nurses will do well to study—defines the attributes essential alike to War and Peace Scouts as energy, self-reliance, courage, reliability and cheerful self-sacrifice in service.

And these attributes are just those which distinguish the finest members of the Nursing Profession—both those who, having served their day and generation faithfully, have passed to their rest and reward, and those, and they are many in all lands, who at the present day are unselfishly serving the community.

From time to time matters of urgency arise demanding special alertness and vigilance on the part of members of our profession, and nurses on the Register maintained by the General Nursing Council for England and Wales are now confronted by such an occasion in the Bill to amend the Nurses Registration Act, 1919, with respect to the registration of existing nurses, presented in the House of Commons on April 3rd by Mr. Joseph Batey, Labour M.P. for Spennymoor.

We drew attention to the danger of this suggested legislation in our last issue, and we desire again to emphasise it, so that every Registered Nurse may realise what is her duty in regard to it.

First there is the duty all nurses owe to their profession, and especially to those members of it—many no longer living—who by courage and self-sacrifice won for them the privileges they now enjoy, to sacredly safeguard those privileges. Foremost of these, and the foundation of all others, is their incorporation under the authority of the State as members of a Registered

Profession, admission to which is possible only to those who have passed through a three years term of training in an approved hospital or hospitals, and have given proof in examinations (both practical and theoretical) conducted by the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, of their competence to be entrusted with the responsible duties required of trained nurses. To women who have given such proof the term State Registered Nurse is at present restricted.

But should the Bill sponsored by Mr. Batey be allowed to become law this will no longer be the case. Existing nurses will be eligible for admission to the State Register who did not trouble to register during the two years term of grace after the passing of the Nurses Registration Act, in 1919, which they could then do on producing evidence of training and character satisfactory to the Council, or who have since failed to submit themselves to the requisite tests; grievous wrong will be done both to Registered Nurses, and to the public, and for practical purposes the State Register of Nurses will be ruined.

For what would be the position? Men and women who have qualified, and paid, for admission to the Register, and thus made available to the public this guarantee of their efficiency, would be placed by the Act on an equal footing with others who have given no such guarantee, and would, moreover, come into direct competition with unstandardised and unskilled labour. This surely is a point which should appeal to members of the Labour Party, who in their own trades would at once "down tools" under similar circumstances.

And the public would once more be in the same unprotected position as before the Registration Act came into force. The Register would no longer afford the security of competence on the part of those registered. How essential this is those will realise who have agonised over a child, or a dearly loved relative, critically ill, knowing that the precious life depended on the competence of the nurse in attendance.

Here, then, is the opportunity for the "joy and adventure of energetic service" for Registered Nurses. Let them seize it, and individually and collectively do their duty for the preservation of the privileges which have been won under the Nurses Registration Act. Let there be no drones in our hive at this juncture but, by forceful action, let us unite to prevent the degradation of the State Register by ignorant and self-interested interference. So shall the nurses of the present generation prove themselves the worthy successors of those who, by fortitude and unmeasured service and devotion through thirty years, won for their profession and for the public those privileges which it is their sacred duty to hand on unimpaired to those who follow them.

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