

## THE PASSING BELL.

### MISS BEATRICE KENT, S.R.N.

To her many friends in the nursing world, as well as to those interested in social service, the news of the death of Miss Beatrice Kent, at Ryde, on April 19th, when on a visit to her sister Mrs. Cartwright, came with a shock of painful surprise, for only a short time before friends in London had seen her in her usual health and spirits, and greatly looking forward to the arrival in this country of a much loved brother whom she had not seen for fifteen years. Alas, when she passed to her rest after a brief illness from influenza and bronchitis, he was still on the high seas.

Miss Kent was trained at the Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford, in General Nursing, and was also a Certified Midwife, holding the diploma of the Rotunda Hospital, Dublin, a training school in midwifery which is world-renowned.

To one of the earnest nature of Miss Kent, it was inevitable that the movement for the State Registration of Nurses should attract her, and that once she had become a convinced registrationist it had her continuous and ardent support. Her watchfulness received its reward in 1919 when, as one of his constituents, having decided to support the candidature of the late Sir Richard (then Capt.) Barnett in North-West St. Pancras, she called upon him to ask him to ballot for a place for a Bill in the forthcoming Session, and if he gained one to give it to the Nurses' Registration Bill. She left him having received his promise to do so. As the world knows, Major Barnett won his place, and, being a man of honour, kept his word, in spite of much pressure to throw over the nurses and introduce other Bills as he amusingly related, telling their promoters that he had given his word to the nurses and intended to keep it. So the Nurses' Bill was introduced, and guided in a masterly way by Sir Richard Barnett through the House of Commons. On its reaching the Report Stage, the Minister of Health, Dr. Christopher Addison, promised to introduce a Bill on behalf of the Government, which as he subsequently stated, was Major Barnett's Bill, and on December 23rd, 1919, this Bill, and also Bills for Scotland and Ireland, became law, and Nursing a recognised Profession in the three kingdoms.

Miss Kent was also a keen supporter of the International Council of Nurses, attended its Congresses, and she and the late Miss Annie Hulme were the delegates of the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain to the business meeting of the Council at San Francisco in 1915, crossing the ocean at considerable risk, when the German submarines were most active.

Then in 1925, as one of the delegates of the National

Council of Nurses of Great Britain, Miss Kent attended the Congress of the International Council of Nurses at Helsingfors, and afterwards the I.C.N. Congress in Paris in 1933. She was thus well known internationally, and the news of her death will be received with much regret by a wide circle of international friends, as it will also by the members of the Registered Nurses' Parliamentary Council of which she was President at the time of her death.

Miss Kent's activities in other directions were many. She was a keen supporter of Women's Suffrage. As a member of the St. Pancras Borough Council she warmly supported the movement for better housing; she made her way into Communist Sunday Schools, and fearlessly claimed the right of the children to religious instruction.

She was deeply interested in the conditions of our prisons, and in the Nursing Service of Registered Nurses provided at Holloway Prison. She believed, as many of those who have studied the question of crime believe, that many of those whose anti-social acts have brought them within the arm of the law are sick persons, mentally and physically, and that there is work for nurses in prisons, for both male and female prisoners. She warmly approved the Report of the Prison Commissioners 1923-4 which, in a lecture she gave to the Royal British Nurses' Association, she described as "an arresting document; reform, humane treatment and compassion characterise it," she said, "throughout." She hoped to see separate remand homes *versus* prisons established for unconvicted persons.

To one of Miss Kent's ardent temperament, life must necessarily have been a difficult process. When it seemed necessary to her to combat evils she did so with courage and conviction, whether the line she took was popular or not. Indeed, courage was perhaps one of her most striking and valuable characteristics in regard to professional

affairs, for only a limited number of nurses appear to possess it in this connection.

She was laid to rest on April 23rd in the churchyard of St. Michael's, Ryde, and amongst the beautiful flowers which found place on the coffin, was a wreath of lovely spring flowers—mauve and pink—from

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES OF GREAT BRITAIN.

"With sorrow and deep admiration for a courageous life, devoted to duty; and with thanks for her signal services to the Nursing Profession from the President and Council."

and one from

THE ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION.

"With admiration and regard from the Royal British Nurses' Association."

So we leave her at rest "in sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection."



THE LATE MISS BEATRICE KENT,  
S.R.N., F.B.C.N.

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