

## IN PARLIAMENT.

"The Vote covers all," so it was said in the days before women won the franchise, and indeed it is the sure and necessary firm foundation for further progress. But does it really cover all? I beg leave to doubt it. True it is that the few women who have so far been returned to Parliament have added little to the value of debate, but, with few exceptions, they have been women of leisure and affluence who have not understood the professional workers' point of view. In regard to nurses and the work of nurses, and its many implications, surely it is reasonable to suppose that they can be better explained by members of the profession itself, who are acquainted with its needs and aspirations, than by anyone else who has to be coached for the purpose. We all know the story of the courtship of Miles Standish, and shall do well to take its lesson to heart. "Why don't you speak for yourself, John," are words of wisdom which cannot be too emphatically emphasised.

We shall therefore do well to endeavour to secure the return of Registered Nurses to the House of Commons when an opportune moment occurs. The selection of candidates will need much care. They must not only know the subjects on which they will speak, but be able to present them concisely, clearly, and forcibly, and to support them by well-reasoned argument. Parliament is one of the most critical of audiences and not tolerant of discursive speeches, but, having listened to all the debates, in both Houses, on the Nurses' Registration Bills, I have the conviction that the Members are very ready to listen with attention and fairness to those who present a subject on which they are specially qualified to speak, are quick to appreciate the points made, and to arrive at sound conclusions. There are Registered Nurses who possess the expert knowledge and the power to carry conviction on the subjects on which they speak, and both the House of Commons and the Nursing Profession would be the gainers if one or more were returned to Parliament.

Sister Bertha Wellin, for some years President of the Swedish Nurses' Association, who for fifteen years was a member of the Swedish Parliament, writes that she was often glad to have her training as a nurse behind her, because it helped her in many ways to understand various questions better. For instance, all matters dealing with nursing, with quackery and with hygiene, as well as sexual hygiene, and many social problems.

In her opinion, training in nursing and social work is a very good basis for a woman who has aspirations for activity in Parliament. For the last eight years Sister Wellin was on a committee on laws, took part in its work, and sometimes had to speak in Parliament on such topics.

When members of the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain passed through Sweden on their way to Finland in 1925, and were entertained with such wonderful kindness and hospitality by the Swedish Nurses' Association, Sister Wellin, when showing us their fine House of Parliament, told us that when she attended there as a member, she always did so in nursing uniform, as she thought it good for the Nursing Profession, and also that it gave her a professional position.

Mrs. Newman-Rahn writes from Finland concerning the work done in Parliament by the Nurse, the only one in the Finnish Parliament, Kyllikki Pohjala, as follows:—

"She has taken the initiative in great changes, betterments and enlarging of our old State hospitals, and new hospitals have also been founded through her initiative. Two of the State hospitals have been greatly enlarged, two other hospitals of the same type are being built. Many other hospitals are renewed. A number of our small cottage hospitals have been founded, and the University

Women's Hospital, and the University Children's Hospital owe their existence to her.

"Besides this she has been actively working on the Committee in regard to sterilisation, to pharmacy and drugs, to midwife and mother welfare, to the care of the mentally diseased, to dentists and the care of teeth.

"Concerning the nurses themselves, she has been active for better accommodation, a shorter working day (48 hours week of work) and better pensions. She has concentrated all her work on health and nursing as important social questions. To this may be added her work for betterment and deepening of professional knowledge and craft, for founding of museums, better travel and tourist conditions, and last but not least, for better living conditions in general. Now she is fighting for the very important matter of child welfare and for the founding of an agency for educational problems.

"In the municipality of Helsingfors (Helsinki) we have had two nurses, whose work was concentrated upon social, educational (schools) and nursing (hospitals) matters.

"So we realise that the activity of the nurses has been favourable, and of great value, not only to the nursing profession, but also to Society."

The Congress will, I feel sure, agree that a marvellous amount of valuable work has been accomplished in the Finnish Parliament by Miss Kyllikki Pohjala, and also by the municipal nurses in Helsingfors.

Their example should stimulate the nurses of other countries to secure representation in Parliament, and follow Miss Pohjala's example.

## ON PUBLIC BODIES.

Registered nurses can never exert their full influence in connection with public affairs until they take their share in the work of public bodies in which nursing plays an important part. To give one instance. On the Hospitals and Nursing Services Committee of the London County Council, which is specially concerned with the work of many thousands of nurses, trained and in training, there is not one Registered Nurse. Yet a Registered Nurse could bring to the deliberations of that Committee much expert and useful work in regard to the training of nurses, their conditions of work, the arrangements of nurses' homes, the care of the sick and of maternity, and of mental cases and of many kindred questions. It is true the London County Council is an elected body, but the Chairmen of the Committees have power to co-opt a certain number of members. On a recent occasion when it became known that there were vacancies on the Hospitals and Nursing Services Committee the British College of Nurses communicated with the Chairman, and asked him to co-opt a Registered Nurse, but was informed that the vacancies had been filled; so neither the large body of nurses, nor the many thousands of patients cared for in L.C.C. Hospitals have the advantage of the presence of a Registered Nurse on the Committee specially concerned with their welfare.

Again, when committees are appointed to consider matters with which nurses are intimately concerned and acquainted, it is rare to find that a Registered Nurse is placed upon them, thus the Departmental Committee appointed by the predecessor in office to the present Minister of Health to consider and report on the question of the capital cost of construction and the annual cost of maintenance of public buildings provided by local authorities—viz., hospitals (including mental hospitals), public assistance institutions, maternity homes, baths and wash-houses, etc., no registered nurse was included on the Committee. Yet an important section must be the construction and organisation of Nurses' Homes, concerning which nurses who have had administrative experience could give especially valuable assistance.

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