

# Royal British Nurses' Association.

Incorporated by



Royal Charter.

THIS SUPPLEMENT BEING THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE CORPORATION.

## CHRISTMAS GREETINGS.

We wish all members of the Association a very happy Christmas and many good things in the coming year. We hope that it will be a prosperous one for them all. We thank them very warmly for all their co-operation in the Association's activities, and especially just now for their kindness to so many sick and aged colleagues, whether members of the Association or otherwise.

## GREETINGS.

### AN APPRECIATION AND A RETROSPECT.

*You cannot choose your battlefield,  
The gods do that for you,  
But you can plant a standard  
Where a standard never flew.*

N. CRANE.

We offer to Mrs. Bedford Fenwick in this issue our congratulations, and our thanks, for fifty years of courageous and untiring work for the advancement of her profession and ours.

Into all departments of the world's life there must enter, from time to time, those whose privilege and cross it is to bear a message for their age, and, if Florence Nightingale brought hers for the development of nursing education and the reform of the hospitals, equally it is to Mrs. Bedford Fenwick that, throughout the world, we owe the impulse for the organisation of the Profession of Nursing. Hers it was to light the torch and plant the standard "where no standard flew"; we had a picture of what this meant when, last summer, the Quadrennial Congress of the International Council of Nurses brought together members of our profession from all over the world, who, in the packed hall at Westminster, acclaimed the inspirer and Founder of a movement rich in opportunities for the relief of suffering and the promotion of sound health.

Some may seek to usurp the leadership, to gather where they have not strayed, and to capture the world's acclamation in doing so, but the one thing they can never take to themselves is the honour that belongs to the planting of a standard "where no standard flew." The struggle that waged round that standard for half a century has been a hot one; but "All progress is strife to the end," and especially the progress that is part of evolution to any real degree. And so we take heart of grace, and realise that Mrs. Fenwick will see reason for these congratulations of ours, for no one more than she is convinced of a truth, expressed somewhere in the writings of Walt Whitman, and which he expresses in words to the effect that in great movements there must be one to cut the path to the house that others of later generations may dwell there in security and well being.

It may be that some will wonder why the battle has often raged round the standard planted on that December after-

noon some fifty years ago. There are many reasons and interests connected with this, but one truth we may point to, and it is that where there is the man or woman of the greatest courage there will be the hottest part of the battle.

It is a fact that is proved both in religious and materialistic history that one cannot have both a spiritual and physical victory, and if there be some who now owe place and power and the world's honours to the planting of the standard of organisation on that December day we may quite safely leave it to time to place all things in their true perspective—"time that has become space," as one philosopher chose to express it—and it is posterity that will adjudicate the honours.

We are still standing too close to that afternoon of fifty years ago to be able to judge to the full all that developed from the invitation of Dr. and Mrs. Bedford Fenwick to a number of eminent medical men and nurses to meet in their drawing-room in Upper Wimpole Street, and to discuss the project of forming what ultimately became the first organisation of nurses in the world—the British Nurses' Association (later the Royal British Nurses' Association). The story of the opposition raised to it, and which has persisted for so long, is a matter that we can leave to history. In spite of it, the promoters were not daunted and placed in their programme the purpose of attaining Registration of Nurses by the State. This was an idea that became an ideal, and, like most movements in their early stages, which have to do with evolution and progress, it was caught up by retardative forces focussed in those, many of them the heads of the profession, who had not caught the vision. Either from fear or economic pressure, they opposed themselves hotly to the proposed new order of things, seeing in the "ideal," as we have called it, something to which the old order would have ultimately to give place—that old order resting on the props of a sentimentality that has left to the present generation a sad legacy in the number who have to be helped through old age by the generosity of their colleagues.

The situation always is that, when a great impulse does arise for world progress it must be carried by one person, then others see the light, always just a few at first, who come to the standard partly because they have seen the vision; partly perhaps they come for another reason, of which they may be but partially conscious and which has been so well expressed by the greatest writer of modern times, Wolfgang von Goethe, when he says: "Him I love who craves the impossible"—him or her, he means, who brings the impossible into the realm of the possible no matter how great the opposition.

Because of this "love" which Goethe interprets after his own fashion, we, fifty years on, greet our leader with a cheer, remembering too that one of the richest privileges that destiny can bring to us is to follow a great leader. Much disappointment has been expressed because Mrs. Fenwick has refused to accept any more tangible evidence of our affection and good will than greetings on December

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)