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EDITORIAL.

WHERE ARE THE TORCH BEARERS ?

Quite frankly we read with shame not to say indignation a circular from the Metropolitan Boroughs Standing Joint Committee sent to local authorities in London which states :—

“ Until further notice the admission of cases of scarlet fever, measles, whooping-cough and dysentery are to be limited to those instances in which hospital treatment, in the opinion of the Borough Medical Officer of Health, is required owing to the severity of the case.

“ Patients suffering from certain other diseases will not be admitted save in very exceptional cases.”

We are informed that the shortage of nurses is responsible for this disastrous direction.

Do the women of England realise the result of this order—and the terrible complications and ruin of health to sufferers which may result from lack of hospital treatment—including skilled nursing? We cannot believe they do—or they would volunteer in overwhelming numbers to do their duty in caring for the sick. It is unbelievable that our young women are no longer inspired with tender sympathy for sick and helpless human beings, but if they are devoid of this grace—what is the reason of their degeneration? From the earliest historical records women have, we find, set an example of selfless devotion. We believe they are as willing as ever to follow the gleam—but where are the torch bearers? We need a flaming propaganda to arouse our girls to a sense of love of country and of public duty. Who has the inspiration and energy to organise and lead the Crusade? It is impossible that the women of England should leave its children to die of disease, or live in perpetual darkness or suffer the strain of silence—unless they themselves are content to be cast into the pit.

The press has been making enquiries into the cause of the shortage of nurses, and no newspaper so far as we can gather stresses the fundamental cause—the lack of control by parents of all classes of the young. Where is the discipline formerly enforced which instructed the child in respect for parental direction, obedience and duty, truth, honour and sacrifice of self—which inspired the child with the realisation that to live nobly was the only right to life?

We must return to the path of duty—to God, to man, to country. Helping to maintain high standards of health—expert knowledge of how to care for the sick and lessen pain, constitutes the profession of nursing, the most soul-satisfying work in the world, as thousands of women can testify. Let this lesson be emphasised. Again we ask, where are the torch bearers?

MASKED NURSES FOR “FEAR OF VICTIMISATION.”

If it had not actually taken place it would appear incredible that a group of England's nurses should have appeared in the streets of London and on a public platform wearing black silk masks when demanding reforms of service “for fear of victimisation.”

Having suffered for half a century from victimisation, during our campaign for the State Registration of Nurses, for their self-determination, and for a free and professionally controlled organ in the press, we hasten to emphasise the fact that courage and self-sacrifice will alone compel victory, and that if reforms are to be attained, those who demand them must stand on their own feet and “face the music” without disguise.

The masked nurses marched towards the City, carrying placards inscribed “L.C.C. nurses demand Fair Play,” and later some of them addressed a crowded meeting of their colleagues from London County Council Hospitals, in St. Pancras Town Hall. The meeting was called to protest against conditions of service, and was organised by the Guild of Nurses.

Placards on the platform read: “L.C.C. nurses demand a 48-hour week,” and “Unnecessary restrictions, bullying, nagging, red tape. Stop this.”

Resolutions were passed demanding: Immediate withdrawal of the spreadover system of duty; application of a 48-hour working week; the right for trained nurses to live out; establishment of conciliation machinery for the settlement of all grievances; and full trade union recognition for the Guild of Nurses.

Mr. G. Vincent Evans, general secretary of the National Union of County Officers, said that when the Nurses' Charter was introduced, embodying the points in the first three resolutions, it was felt that the L.C.C. would set an example to the rest of the country.

Instead, when the testing time came, the L.C.C. showed that such a spirit of leadership was sadly lacking. The result was the use of this inaction as a vicious and indefensible argument for defeating the Limitation of Hours Bill in the House of Commons.

Yet many of the voluntary hospitals, the Middlesex County Council and other provincial county boroughs have introduced the 48-hour working week. We desire to place on record that many Matrons and Sisters in the service of the London County Council are women of the noblest type, whose whole lives are devoted to the service of the sick, and who are loved and respected by their junior staffs, but bureaucracy prevails at Headquarters under which its nursing system suffers.

It is reported that Mr. Herbert Morrison, Socialist Leader of the Council, refused to receive a deputation of the Guild of Nurses. Therefore the protest meetings are to continue.

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