

Royal British Nurses' Association.

Incorporated by



Royal Charter.

THIS SUPPLEMENT BEING THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE CORPORATION.

OUR OPPOSITION TO THE PROPOSITION OF AN AMENDING ACT.

We have had many letters of enquiry and thanks in connection with the Meeting held at the Caxton Hall to protest against the proposal of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Nursing Services to amend the Nurses Registration Act to include a Roll of half-trained nurses. We can assure our members that we shall continue to use our utmost energy to oppose the proposition; but if it is to be effective, the opposition cannot all emanate from one centre, and every member should contribute in some way to oppose the destruction of the Nurses Registration Act in so far as its professional value and its safeguards to the body politic are concerned. Each can at least write to her Member of Parliament if she cannot find time for more. One nurse asks, "If we are beaten, what can you do?" The answer is easy, "Fight on." Acts can be amended, but they can also be repealed, and the agitation that will follow the former course will not be without its results in educating the nurses to resent injustice and broken contracts and the public to exercise discrimination. But if the nurses will only wake up and unite, another thirty years' war like that which preceded the passage of the Acts may be avoided. Certainly the conflict will not end with any hurried passage of an amending Bill. Others have asked (somewhat unthinkingly perhaps), "What will happen when such a Roll is established?" We have said much about that already. Perhaps the Roll will prove infinitely more popular than the Register; shortage of qualified nurses will increase then and standards will fall. It will be easy then to drop any barriers the hospitals may at first set up to reserve posts of responsibility for highly qualified women. Probably perforce the standards for the General Register will get into closer company with the Roll of the "what do you call hers."

The point of view of a looker-on is sometimes enlightening. A personal friend, who is not a nurse, attended the Protest Meeting, and we asked to hear her view of it. "To me it seems far worse than an anachronism. It is decadence, foolishness and ignorance that you are being called upon to fight. But what strikes me more than anything is the benevolence, the concern, the generous safeguards and all the rest that are to be expended on the people who, to put it bluntly, *have not stood up to their job*. If they are worth anything they would have qualified for it, whatever the effort. A low type of intellect has gained an inflated value here surely. If the Registration Act is to ensure proper standards, it seems to me you *must* defend it. To me, nursing seems the noblest calling a woman can choose, for what could be holier than caring for the temple of the Spirit; and why the Government, or anyone else, should seek to use your Act to cover people who, as I said, have not stood up to their job is beyond me."

We thank very warmly all those who have contributed to the Defence Fund; we are very grateful for any contributions to the war chest, however small.

LECTURE.

"THE CHANGING OUTLOOK OF RHEUMATISM."

By Dr. STEVENSON.

Dr. Stevenson delivered his lecture on "Rheumatism" on a very imaginative and descriptive plan. He had prepared a large diagram, and on this had depicted rheumatism as a vast river of possibly varied and, even yet, of unknown origin, flowing onwards to the sea of disease in general. He traced this river on from its outlet near the sea until the present time, when we may be said to be within sight of the foothills from whence it springs; thus he indicated the idea that we are getting within sight of a complete knowledge of the disease in so far as that is possible. He asked his audience to see the diagram as though from an aeroplane that gave a view over the ages. At many points were inscribed the names of great medical workers who had played their part in exploring the course of the river down the centuries.

Rheumatism in Early Times.

As commencing near the mouth of the river the doctor said that arthritis is older than man himself, for evidence of it has been found in the skeletons of extinct saurians of the cretaceous period, and it is possible even here to trace the connection between dental caries and arthritis. Wood Jones states that arthritis was *par excellence* the bone disease of the ancient Egyptians. Under the name of Podagra, Hippocrates described the condition that we now term gout; this was the most widely studied form of rheumatic complex in the time of Hippocrates, although he also described briefly what we now call acute rheumatism. The relationship between gout and gluttony was a favourite subject of Virgil; but it was not until the 13th century that differentiation was made between the real river of rheumatism, as opposed to mixed rivers of rheumatism and gout. This differentiation was first made by Radulfe. Areatus, of Cappadocia, who lived in the second century, said that none but the gods understood rheumatism. The word "rheumatism" has its origin in the days when the condition was taken to be an outward manifestation of a peccant humour or rheum, flowing round from the brain to other parts of the body and stirring up aches and pains. The term was used for any unknown joint swelling.

Rheumatism in the Age that brings Scientific Thought.

In the 17th century, Ballonius added weight to Radulfe's teaching, and further differentiated gout from poly-arthritis. Soon after Wiseman made particular note of tuberculous arthritis. His tributary stream in the history of rheumatism was not explored until the 18th century, when Percival Pott further developed Wiseman's work and recognition was given to his discoveries in the name Pott's Disease, *i.e.*, tuberculous infection of the spine. The next name, which appeared on the banks of the river in the diagram, was Sydenham's, and perhaps those who suffer from rheumatism owe most to his work. In 1676 he

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