

Royal British Nurses' Association.

Incorporated by



Royal Charter.

THIS SUPPLEMENT BEING THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE CORPORATION.

THE POLICY OF THE ASSOCIATION ON THE PROFESSIONAL SITUATION.

"ACCESSORIES TO" VERSUS THE WILL TO BE FREE.

The holiday season has come again and we hope that, to all our members, it will bring happy days when they lay aside their work for a season. There is always variety in the experiences which the nurses select for a holiday. Some few like the quiet and peace of the country, others choose the seashore with its ever-changing vista of water and sky. But more and more there is the tendency to journey farther afield, to go to other lands or to take a sea voyage. All are good if they lay in a store of memories that will enlarge the view and let in refreshing lights upon the tasks and problems that mostly make up the sum of life throughout the year.

The Incline—Downwards.

The months that have intervened since the last holiday season have been strenuous from the point of view of the Association—strenuous, alas, not in the matter of development or progress, but in doing battle to defend what has been won in the past and to prevent the profession from finding itself on the incline downwards. Once that has commenced for a movement there is no swiftness greater than what follows; it is this knowledge that has inspired those, entrusted by the members with the guidance of the Association, to the strenuous efforts which have been made, during the past months, to oppose the extension of the functions of the Nurses' Registration Act to cover the unqualified.

What Constitutes a Policy?

Someone remarked recently: "I wonder that you trouble to fight for the nurses. They don't value their profession; many hardly realise what a profession implies." But that is not a right point of view. A professional Association such as ours must form its policy; in other words, it must declare its principles, and must fight for them, when occasion calls, whatever the odds may be, as embodied in opposition and indifference. The first point, in relation to such principles and their preservation is not merely whether we win or lose. It is that, whatever happens, we fight the forces of hindrance which usually appear clothed in the garment of expediency. It is, alas, largely in the lap of politicians whether we shall be victorious after those months of struggle and vigilance, but we can at least look back upon them with the consciousness that we have used all the power at the disposal of the Association, to maintain the integrity of the profession and to protect its professional standards. The word integrity is not too strong for the occasion, because a *real* profession is absolutely a living entity with duties and responsibilities to the world and to the ages; from every right point of view, be it a spiritual one, or one related to education or duty, we are morally bound to safeguard the standards of a profession so intimately bound up as ours is with the welfare of the sick

and the health of the people. If we do not strive to, then we are false, either as individuals or societies, to the aims and ideals of the past; false, too, to those who shall seek, in the future, to promote and protect professional progress. A great writer, defining evil, described it as "delayed good." Good that has met with the forces of hindrance and so been held back or made to succumb. It has been our effort, throughout the past months, to prevent such delay or hindrance and the perversion and illegitimate use of the Nurses' Registration Act. And, whatever the result, we have to reflect that this should mean more than either victory or defeat to an Association such as this. What it must hold to, through all eventualities, are its principles, remembering that, "Not failure, but low aim is crime." Should we not be successful in protecting the profession from the tinkering with, and the degradation of, its standards and efficiency all is not lost. The forces used in the struggle towards maintaining what seems right to us, whether victorious or otherwise, must flow into the world, into the future, to be transmuted into the "fine gold" that all spiritual striving in freedom arrives at at last and which sometimes becomes the seed and inspiration for the strivings of a later age. In matters such as these which have claimed so much attention of late, we have a responsibility, and a great one, not only to the profession, but also to the Association, its destiny and its traditions.

Progression or Retrogression?

It is at the present time a duty to the R.B.N.A. to see that it does not make of itself an accessory to such proposals, as are bound to set the profession on the incline downwards, without strong protest. Nothing can stand still in the march of time. There must either be progression or retrogression. That is an inexorable law. The first push on the incline downwards was, in our view, taken when (after having twice considered and turned down the proposal) the decision was arrived at at last in the General Nursing Council to hand over the responsibility of teaching certain subjects, connected with our professional curriculum, to another profession. No man prospers so suddenly as he who can take advantage of the errors of others, and soon there will be a large field of fine responsibility and economic opportunity handed over to the teachers which was the birthright of the highly qualified members of our own profession who have met the minimum demands of the State and then proceeded to take the Sister Tutors' Diploma. We were unsuccessful in defending the profession against the ultimate capitulation of the General Nursing Council in this matter, but at least the Association cannot be accused of being an accessory to the step. By an accessory we do not mean merely that a society or an individual supports and promotes some suggested scheme or action. Far more than that—we hold that when a society (or individual) has remained dumb in the presence of something it disapproves of, inert before the responsibility to form an opinion, that society—or individual as the

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