

# THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED  
THE NURSING RECORD

EDITED BY MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK REGISTERED NURSE.

No. 2048. Vol. 87.

MARCH, 1939.

Price Sevenpence.

## EDITORIAL.

### NATIONAL NURSING NEEDS.

The National shortage of nurses has inspired Mrs. H. J. Tennant, C.H., and other practical women to form a committee in aid of supply. This is a step in the right direction, and naturally the first step towards success was to enlist the approval and support of Queen Mary who, in reply to a Petition for a Message of Encouragement to a meeting to be held at the Guildhall, on February 11th last, at which the Archbishop of Canterbury was to preside, not only acceded to the request, but herself attended the meeting accompanied by Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, and the Earl of Athlone.

There were present in the hall, and at an overflow meeting in the Council Chamber, some 1,500 young women, senior girls from schools in all parts of the country, and members of youth organisations, who before the meeting had visited a number of hospitals in London to see something of the conditions in which nurses work and live.

The Archbishop read to the meeting the following message given by Queen Mary: "I am so deeply interested in the welfare of our hospitals and their patients that I am concerned to know that there is at the present time a serious shortage of nurses. One cause may be the impression that the conditions of work and the prospects for the trained nurse are sometimes unsatisfactory. If so, I trust that recommendations which have been made, especially in the report of the Committee over which my brother, Lord Athlone, presided, will result in a real improvement in these conditions where this is necessary. But I trust equally that the sense of vocation and the spirit of disinterested service which have been part of the great tradition of nursing in this country will not be forgotten in the future. Certainly now more than ever willing helpers are needed in the sacred cause of preventing ill-health, of securing the safety of motherhood, and of relieving sickness and pain.

"I appeal to the girls of the country to ask themselves whether they may not find in this great profession not only a career of interest and usefulness but one of the truest and noblest forms of national service."

The Archbishop of Canterbury, having read the message, said her Majesty's words admirably summarised the purpose of the meeting. Continuing, he said:—

"It is necessary to speak of the disquieting fact that just when the need of trained nurses is so great, the supply of them seems to be failing. There can be no doubt as to the serious shortage of nurses. Let me

mention one very impressive evidence. A petition to Her Majesty Queen Mary asking her to send a message to this meeting, and through it to the whole country, which might stimulate recruitment for this great service, was signed by some 55 responsible leaders of the medical and surgical professions, of public authorities, of hospitals, of nursing associations, of societies of women and girls, and of the Churches. I am very familiar with lists of signatures in support of all sorts of public causes, but I am not exaggerating when I say that I have almost never seen a list more representative and influential.

"The petition speaks of the shortage of nurses as 'a matter of urgent national importance.'"

"Doubtless," continued His Grace, "one reason is dissatisfaction with conditions of work and rates of remuneration, and with the time for leisure and the freedom to use that leisure. It is right that in these respects the great profession of nursing should be comparable with other careers now open to girls.

"Yet what we also most ardently desire is that the profession of nursing should be regarded not merely as an attractive and profitable career, but as a career which still demands that sense of vocation, that spirit of disinterested service of the sick and suffering which have marked its great tradition in the past."

Dr. David Mathew, Bishop Auxiliary of Westminster, read the following message on behalf of His Eminence Cardinal Hinsley: "The work of nursing is a vocation which must find its part in the full development of the Christian life. The nurse's whole life fulfils that tradition of the Good Samaritan which is so integral a part of the Christian world. Inevitably therefore we give our full encouragement to the recruitment appeal of the National Nursing Need. But mindful of the teaching of the social pastorals, which are the fruit of the great pontificate which has just closed, we would also stress the need to bear in mind the fact that really adequate leisure and remuneration must always be secured to all who embark generously upon this great vocation."

Mr. H. L. Eason, principal of London University, said: "The medical profession needed the help of nurses more and more every day, for surgical and medical treatment was getting more complex and required more after treatment. Nursing should be looked upon as a vocation, not that it should not be properly paid."

Miss Merry, London Inspector for the Queen's Institute of District Nursing, said that at present there was scarcity of district nurses. More than 1,000 were needed to care for those ill in their own homes.

Miss M. Reynolds, Matron, London Hospital, made an admirable appeal "to a fine gathering of young people." She presented nursing as a great career for

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)