

# THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED  
THE NURSING RECORD

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No. 2077. Vol. 89.

AUGUST, 1941.

Price Sevenpence.

## EDITORIAL.

### GOOD NEWS.

We learn on good authority that it is very improbable that Parliament will deal with the burning question of the "Assistant Nurse" during the war, raised and advocated most unjustifiably by the Royal College of Nursing and the Association of Hospital Matrons, at this time of stress in the Nursing Profession; the members of which desire in the present crisis to devote every ounce of energy they possess to their duty to the sick and upkeep of the national health, and not in a professional struggle to the death. So far as the Matrons go, we have not, in reply to enquiries, found one who is in favour of degrading the standards of professional education or legal status of the Registered Nurse, which would be the inevitable result of the policy of the Royal College of Nursing in its clamour for "Control" of Nurses not capable of attaining the standard prescribed for Registered Nurses, and which is under consideration by what is termed "The Special Reconstruction Committee." This Committee is composed of representatives of Nurses' Organisations, from which those known to be opposed to depreciation of standards have been excluded.

It is satisfactory to learn that delegates of the Infectious Hospitals Matrons' Association, and the Mental Hospital Matrons' Association have been instructed in annual meeting assembled to oppose by forcible resolutions the policy of the Royal College of Nursing in its demand for legal status and control of "Assistant Nurses," semi-trained women, by the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, the Governing Body of Registered Nurses as applied through the Nurses' Registration Act of 1919.

As we pointed out in our March issue, 1941, in our appeal to Registered Nurses to save their professional status and economic security, "should the Royal College of Nursing, through social influence, carry its disastrous policy into effect, no woman with any sense whatever will devote three years to train and qualify as a Registered Nurse, to be associated after her strenuous work with a Roll of semi-qualified competitors," and we called upon Managers of efficient Nurse Training Schools to carefully consider this matter before it was too late.

#### The Liberty of the Subject.

Then we touched on the Liberty of the Subject, in other words, the right of the public to employ whom it chooses as helps, companions, caretakers, and in a domestic capacity. Institute a Roll by Act of Parliament of semi-trained women, and to-morrow there will still be at work hundreds of "helps" in the service of the public.

Never has Parliament in this country ventured to "close" the Profession of Medicine. The Medical Acts provide for safe standards of education and treatment, but so-called "quacks," so long as they do not assume professional status, are not prohibited from attending the public, if they so wish it.

So with "Assistant Nurses," so long as they do not delude the public by assuming to be "qualified" nurses, neither they nor the public have any grievance, so long as the Nurses' Registration Acts are in force and the General Nursing Councils perform their duty efficiently. But as we have said before, if the Royal College of Nursing, and the heads of the Nurse Training Schools approve of the depreciation of the present standard of Nursing, let them have the courage of their opinions and control the Roll of semi-trained women themselves.

What we Registered Nurses have a right to defend are the standards, status, and title we have earned, paid for, and enjoy as Registered Nurses under Act of Parliament. Our Cause is just, we shall fight for it.

#### Forewarned is Forearmed.

But we cannot afford a period of appeasement, a policy which has been responsible for the most terrible disaster in history.

Those of us who realise the proposed danger of inefficiency to standards of national health, and in the care of the sick, must "Put our trust in God and keep our powder dry."

Parliament will never venture to make Nursing, any more than Medicine, a closed profession, but it must be kept well informed of our convictions, and we Registered Nurses are the women whose duty it is to protect the sick from an unreliable guarantee such as is now demanded for the "Assistant Nurse."

And we have yet another duty: we must not only protect the standard of nursing efficiency which by devoted service our pioneers have attained, but we must organise to voice progressive demands as they arise. In these times of evolution there can be no standing still. Scientific medicine is advancing throughout the world with rapid strides; we nurses must be educated and organised to supply necessary supplementary service. This cannot be done without a concentrated effort and without financial support.

#### We must Climb Up, not Down.

It is time we Registered Nurses formed a Committee to define the basic professional programme for the advancement of nursing. We must climb up, not down. Let us set about it. Let us consider the matter at the forthcoming Annual Meeting of the British College of Nurses.

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