

THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF NURSING.

"RENDER TO CÆSAR THE THINGS THAT ARE CÆSAR'S."

In the official organ of the Royal College of Nursing, issued on March 29 last, the following statements are published:—

(1) In the Editorial article it is stated: "There is no shadow of doubt but that the rapid growth and influence of the College was instrumental in obtaining State registration within three years of its formation" and

(2) On page 270, under the heading, "What the College Has Done," the seventh claim is "State Registration—Gives Protection to Nurses and a distinguishing uniform."

Both these claims are untrue. They claim credit for the initiative and successful work of others. Fortunately, the history for the demand for statutory education, legal status, and self-determination for Trained Nurses has been published from its inception, in 1887, in *The Nursing Record*—now the *BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING*—and unjustifiable statements can be refuted.

The long struggle of the pioneers for State Registration of Nurses with reactionary employers, and ignorant politicians, is acknowledged to have been the cruellest struggle with autocracy which women have fought in this country in their demand for self-determination and justice. It constitutes an episode of which the epitome has still to be written.

The group of persons to whom the trained nurses owe their professional status, ultimately grouped in the "Central Committee for the State Registration of Nurses," promoted their first Bill which was introduced into the House of Commons, in 1904. This Bill, introduced into the House of Lords by the late Lord Ampthill, in 1908, was passed without a Division at any stage, but was refused time in the Commons.

The justifiable demand for nursing reform continued, together with the systematic education of the Press and Members of Parliament, and ultimately, in 1919—introduced by the late Sir Richard Barnett—the Central Committee's Bill passed its Second Reading in the Commons, to be obstructed in that House, on its Third Reading by the political spokesmen of the College of Nursing, who "talked it out" in the cruellest manner. The College of Nursing, amongst whose founders were to be found some of the most subtle "antis" had, in 1919, drafted a Bill which provided for the government of the Nursing Profession by the Council of the College. *This Bill, however, was never introduced into the House of Commons.*

Time was ripe for nursing reform, the Government therefore promised to promote a Bill for the State Registration of Nurses, and Dr. Addison (now Lord Addison), then Minister of Health, took charge of it. The Act received the King's Assent, in December, 1919, the petition of the Central Committee for an independent Governing Body—thanks to Lord Addison and the late Sir Robert Morant—having been acceded to. Separate Acts for Scotland and for Ireland were also agreed to. From these irrefutable facts it will be seen that the Royal College of Nursing owes an apology not only to the professional pioneers who devoted years of

service in attaining this reform, but to the present generation of nurses for misleading them on historical facts.

Let not the names of four great leaders whose selfless devotion in attaining nursing reforms, for the benefit of national health, and who have passed hence, be forgotten: Bedford Fenwick, Isla Stewart, Margaret Breay and Margaret Huxley made great sacrifices in life. Let their memories be held in honour. Let those of us who venerate honour "render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's."

E. G. F.

MEETING TO DISCUSS A ROLL OF ASSISTANT NURSES.

At the meeting of the London Branch recently held at the Royal College of Nursing in London to discuss the question of a Roll of Assistant Nurses very little definite information was forthcoming and the majority of those present were dumb. Edinburgh had sent "a questionnaire" to their members, and suggested that this should be done to all the branch organisations. Miss Cowlin expressed the opinion that this suggestion would be a most dangerous proceeding. Why? We wonder. Those attending the Meeting gathered it was obvious the College was out to recognise Assistant Nurses, but no scheme had apparently been agreed which the Meeting could discuss. Some irrelevant remarks were made concerning the National Council of Nurses, which during war acquiesced last year in the proposal to suspend its large Meetings in London for a time but as the National Council is formed of affiliated organisations of Registered Nurses, it would be entirely beyond its province to repudiate its fundamental basis of organisation. One lady present asked if the College was seeking to protect the patient by raising the status of the inefficient? As she received no reply, she then asked the College to define what they meant by an Assistant Nurse, and in reply was asked by Miss Cowlin to "define a Nurse." We do not gather that the simple reply was made that the State Register of Nurses contains the names of men and women who have a right to the title professionally.

Edinburgh had suggested that it did not seem fair to the Members who could not attend Meetings, not to give them a chance to express their views. There was no resolution to act on this reasonable suggestion, and indeed no definite action was agreed at the Meeting.

We gathered from expressions of opinion outside the precincts of the Royal College of Nursing, that much as they resent the necessity of organisation and action in time of war, Registered Nurses will submit to no "Quisling" policy where their just rights are concerned, and intend to fight strenuously to protect the public and themselves from grave injustice.

An Opportunity.

The Voting Papers for the Election of Council of the Royal College of Nursing, 1941-1942, has been issued. As there are 16 candidates in England for 8 vacancies, members really interested in their Governing Body might invite a reply before recording their votes to the following question: If elected will you oppose the institution of a Roll of Semi-trained Assistant Nurses by Act of Parliament? Please reply Yes or No.

AN UNJUSTIFIABLE APPEAL.

Some surprise has been aroused in Canada by an appeal made by the Royal College of Nursing to Canadian nurses to contribute to a Fund to help English nurses suffering

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