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EDITORIAL.

"TRUNDLING INTO HELL LIKE A WAGGON DOWN A HILL."

After carefully studying the Report of the Nursing Reconstruction Committee of the Royal College of Nursing on the Assistant Nurse, to which we refer elsewhere, the above quotation appeared especially apt so far as Nursing as a Profession is concerned.

History repeats itself. In our village eighty years ago there were two places of worship—the church with the exquisite spire for which the Vale of Belvoir is famous, guiding the heart of man to spheres beyond the stars, and a little mud cottage in which the few dissenters gathered from time to time. The latter humble "chapel" we children were forbidden to enter, which, of course, incited us when authority was napping to listen outside the door.

Thus, one Sunday afternoon, finding the door ajar, we listened with glee. A few poor people seated on benches with bowed heads were being castigated, and thoroughly enjoying it, by the preacher, a rugged man of the people.

Shaking his fist in their faces, he roared:—

"You are trundling into 'ell like a waggon down an 'ill" (they all groaned in happy unison), "and don't you forget it—it's gloves off when fighting the devil."

This incident has never been effaced from our memory; and, so far as the Nursing Profession is concerned, it would appear especially pertinent at the present crisis. It is just what Lord Horder's Committee, with the covert support of the Minister of Health, proposes the Registered Nurses should do.

In the year 1887 the trained nurses in the United Kingdom awoke. They realised that they had human and professional duties, and, rightly, they united in the British Nurses' Association and faced autocracy in all its force, its love of power, avarice, and ignorance. They had forceful leaders; they stood shoulder to shoulder; they gave all that humanity could offer to the cause of duty—drudgery, loyalty, and their petty pence. It took thirty years' intensive organisation to climb from chaos to legal status, opposed as they were by privileged employers, and another twenty years to maintain it, at the cost of a million pounds; and we state without hesitation that we intend to fight the policy of the Royal College of Nursing every step of the way on its de-grading policy for the Nursing Profession. What we have we hold, and we have no intention whatever of stepping off the hill-top we have attained and trundling into Hades or elsewhere by order of the Horder Committee.

The policy of the Royal College of Nursing is no new thing; it is the old demand of the employer to dominate the employed, always specially pernicious where women are concerned, especially with those whose sympathies are specifically humane.

It is well to know past history and who our enemies are.

The intolerance of certain hospital managers, their medical staffs, and amenable Matrons to self-determination for Registered Nurses was primarily inspired *sub rosa* by one man, the late Sir Edwin Cooper Perry, Medical Superintendent of Guy's Hospital, a man of peculiarly subtle acumen and intolerance of feminine intellectual capacity, who for a quarter of a century was the power behind the anti-registration throne and the practical promoter and organiser of the College of Nursing, from which has emanated the scheme for de-grading the Profession of Nursing—closing it as a profession, staffed by ignorance, controlled by a caucus, and depriving the British people of free admittance of attendants into their own homes!

We may well ask, as the free nurses are doing: Are we going to submit to this tyranny, or are we going to fight it, as the nation is fighting for its soul in opposition to Hitlerism? There is but one answer: We shall fight, and ultimately we shall win.

We shall win, not only because our cause, the efficient and safe care of the sick, is a righteous one, but because nothing has, or ever can subdue the power of the spirit when faced merely with the material claims of expediency.

But do not let us forget that our enemies are socially and financially powerful, and that victory can only be attained by self-sacrifice.

QUEEN MARY, PATRON OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF NURSING.

Queen Mary is the Patron of the Royal College of Nursing. We do not know how far Her Majesty has been informed of the reactionary demands of its Reconstruction Committee concerning the semi-trained Assistant Nurse, or of the strong feeling against them.

But we do know that no body of interested persons has any right to place a member of the Royal Family in antagonistic opposition to the conscientious convictions of an influential body of loyal enfranchised citizens, such as Registered Nurses are. We refrain from further criticism on this matter until the Reconstruction Committee elucidates, without ambiguity, whether or no it has the sanction of its Patron for de-grading nursing standards, and depriving Registered Nurses of their economic security.

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