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EDITORIAL.

THE STUDENT NURSE AWAKES.

We have been waiting for it for some time. That is—the awakening and uprising of the Student Nurses' Organisations. It was inevitable under the circumstances that it would evolve. It will be remembered that the Royal College of Nursing—through a system of official hospital control—encouraged student nurses to combine. The system of appointing a treasurer who compulsorily collected fees monthly which were paid over to the Royal College of Nursing, with the understanding that when their training was terminated students would automatically become members of the Royal College, was as inexcusable as it was unprincipled, and not a few students resented the system of taxation during training, with practically no liberty of action as to becoming members of the College. It became customary in some of the larger hospitals for the Certificate of Training and that of the College to be handed out at one and the same time, with the instinctive knowledge that professional promotion was illusory unless the unwritten law was obeyed.

This most undesirable system of compulsion has now pertained for many years, and intelligent student nurses are now awake to the possibilities of the situation. They have contributed thousands of pounds to the Royal College under duress, and very wisely they are asking for some return "for my half-crown." It is announced in the lay Press that student nurses are asking for direct representation not only on the Council of the Royal College but—what is more direct—personal representation on hospital committees, so that they may state their own case without intermediary, either through medical or the matron's department. How this will work out remains to be seen, but although it may not be realised, the autocratic action of the Association of Hospital Matrons in demanding the de-grading of nursing standards by the registration of assistant nurses, and consequently semi-trained economic competition with the highly qualified Registered Nurse, has aroused an inquiring mind upon the part of the Student Nurses. Sooner or later the intelligent minority were certain to consider their present insecurity of tenure and unite to protect themselves. How best this can be done is not yet quite apparent, but the awakening to a sense of self-determination and professional responsibility is all to the good. We welcome it.

We advise that our Student Nurses should take a wide outlook before taking concrete action. Let them keep in

touch with progress and organisation by carefully studying the international nursing Press. Thus, this week, we note *Una* reports that a meeting of student nurses was recently held in Melbourne, at which Miss Bell, President of the Royal Victorian College, informed the students that the constitution approved by them had been accepted by the Council of the College. In view of these alterations members of these Student Nurses' Associations would be able to elect two representatives to the Council of the College of Nursing in Melbourne.

Miss Bell urged student nurses to join their Association and to form units in their hospitals. By this means they would be organised and would be able to contact units in other hospitals with mutual benefit to all concerned.

A letter was sent to all training schools informing nurses of the steps taken at the meeting.

We then turn to *Public Health Nursing* (U.S.A.). In the August issue, Miss Irene H. Charley, S.R.N., has an informative article: "War-time Impressions from England." It is instructive, touching as it does on various nursing developments made necessary by war. We note the following paragraph:—

"At the present time there is an unmistakable indication that the nursing profession is seriously considering a more closely knit organisation and the need for group action. . . . The Student Nurses' Association is exerting a real influence as student nurses begin to realise they cannot learn too soon how to manage their own affairs. It is noticeable in any meeting of nurses that the younger ones are learning to express themselves with dignity and grace. . . . The nursing profession has in the brief period of war shown its willingness to abandon a policy of isolationism and is now playing a larger part in women's affairs generally." . . . "For years the profession had asked for Nurse representation on official bodies for working out professional plans. For years this simple logical right was withheld, until the stimulus of war emphasised the wisdom of the nurses' claim."

So far, so good, but the only path of real progress in the status of nurses and nursing is self-government, uninfluenced by unprofessional Potentates and Powers.

The organisation of the British College of Nurses, Ltd., is based on professional self-control. Its Council is entirely composed of Registered Nurses—neither members of the medical profession nor the laity are eligible to take part in its government. The College has a substantial endowment, and through its influence Registered Nurses have the power of independence.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)