

ments, and, incidentally, those of her colleagues in greatness. Most notable was the late Miss Isla Stewart, who was so intimately concerned with her in the foundation of the International Council of Nurses.

Mrs. Fenwick herself was an extremely gifted and able journalist. She had a persuasive and poetic bent, embellished with a vivid imagination. She wrote many a beautiful article. She was also, on occasion, devastatingly critical and shrewd and she wrote fearlessly to expose injustices which were inflicted on the Nursing Profession. Like a voice crying in the wilderness, she warned Nurses of their almost criminal lack of foresight where their own interests were at stake. She implored them never to compromise, but to stand firm in their right demands for justice, freedom, and dignity, and for the best possible conditions and education of Nurses. Like a true prophet, she often received but scant honour in her own country and her truly prophetic advice was, more often than not, ignored.

On many occasions Mrs. Fenwick appeared almost psychic. She seemed able to see into the future. She would give advice with an infallible air of knowledge, and her reasons for so doing were indicated later, during the course of time. She possessed sound common sense, clear reasoning powers, and great courage. Fear was an unknown quantity to her. She was dogged and tenacious, and once she had made up her mind on the correctness of a line of action, no argument could shake her from her purpose. She wrote as she thought and spoke, with rapier-thrust directness and with utter conviction. Just one example here will show how her clear-sightedness prevented her worrying needlessly. A colleague once asked her what she thought would happen to Hitler. She replied, emphatically and without hesitation, "Hitler is mortal."

Honours have come to Mrs. Fenwick through the medium of her pen. She was elected President of the Society of Women Journalists from 1910-11, and she had the honour of representing the Society in Westminster Abbey at the Coronation of King George V, and she described the function magnificently.

OTHER DECORATIONS.

During the Great War of 1914-18 which devastated Europe, and which laid the foundation for the even greater war of 1939, Mrs. Fenwick successfully organised the French Flag Nursing Corps, which was composed of 250 Certificated British Nurses. These brave women worked in the danger zones and elsewhere under the French Government, and Mrs. Fenwick visited them as often as she could obtain the necessary permission. For her great services in this connection, she received the Reconnaissance Française from the French.

Another decoration of which she was very proud was the Ruban de Chevalier de l'Order de Leopold I. (First Class), which was graciously bestowed on her by the late King Albert of the Belgians, in 1933. She received this during the meeting of the I.C.N., which was then being held in Brussels, in recognition of her work as Founder. At the same time, she received the Silver Medal of the Assistance Publique from the French Government—a medal which she greatly prized.

THE BRITISH COLLEGE OF NURSES.

In 1926, Mrs. Bedford Fenwick decided to found a new College for Nurses. Like the Journal, it was to be



MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK ATTIRED FOR A SUFFRAGETTE PROCESSION.

run for the benefit of Registered Nurses, governed by a Council formed of Registered Nurses only. Its aims are "efficient professional and civic education, economic security, legal protection, social and benevolent help." She was determined from the first that for a college to be truly democratic and run for the greater benefit of Nurses, no employers of Nurses, nor any member of an employing body, should have a seat on the Council. This was a great stride forward, and many Registered Nurses who have served on the Council under her Presidency, have been sadly enlightened on the methods by which Nurses have spinelessly submitted to control and government by persons outside their own profession, serving on Committees of so-called Nurses' Associations.

She was ably assisted in this foundation by her husband (Dr. Bedford Fenwick), who was largely responsible for the munificent endowment of £100,000, and who was its Trustee and first Treasurer. The first meeting of this new Council was held on July 20th, 1926, in the beautiful Board Room at 431, Oxford Street, W.1. At this meeting, Mrs. Bedford Fenwick was confirmed in the office of President; and Miss M. Breay, and Miss H. L. Pearse were appointed Vice-Presidents. Many other eminent Nurses were received as Fellows and Members. The whole of the proceedings were conducted with great dignity and the new College was founded in high hopes of its future usefulness to the Profession of Nursing. It is for us who remain to tend the sapling which has grown from an acorn until it becomes a vast oak tree, sheltering and protecting Nurses who are nobly striving to do their duty, ever to watch their interests, and to do battle for them when their rights and privileges are in peril.

The College is now firmly established and will be a lasting memorial to the great Lady who founded it, and who died, 21 years later, still its active President, ever watchful, like a good Captain on the Bridge, of the changing circumstances affecting her beloved profession, and attempting bravely to steer "her ship" from the rocks which would destroy it.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)