

In Parliament

Much discussion has taken place during the present session regarding nurses. Their hours of work, their pay, their treatment generally, has come in for much criticism. Nurses sitting in the ladies' gallery must have felt their ears (particularly the right ones) burn when their gallant advocates feelingly presented their claims to consideration. It is well to have supporters, but nurses do not, we are sure, feel that they should be so lifted up for admiration and so extolled for self-sacrifice as would be supposed. No doubt they have done well their part in public life; but it is their choice, and as one who knows I may say that a nurse's life is a happy one—full of interesting work (not too hard or exhaustive in these days); full of variety; full of human interest; full of what the maternal instinct in every normal woman consists of and develops, the call of the helpless and suffering; full of the joyousness of youth, with happy companionship to share in work and pleasure. How far above other women were their chances of sharing in the Great War? How full of envy their sisters who were not gratified to go forth and help! No; we cannot get up any feeling of pity whatever.

Complaints were brought forward of overwork, of breakdown from overwork; but the number of rescues from what might have been the result of the aimlessness of life far exceed the few breakdowns in health.

Complaints of undue domestic work have been made. Well, in this country, with the difficulties of obtaining adequate domestic service for either home or institution, such work must mingle with every form of living. If nurses have to lend a hand to make the wheels run smoothly, it will but prepare them better for higher positions in the future. We do not advocate their time being spent in such work during their preparation for the nursing profession, but we think they must be prepared for the inevitable.

Salaries for nurses in training was a great feature of debate. Members cannot understand that during training the

payment in money should be nominal, whereas after qualification nurses should be paid such salaries as may enable them to save for old age, or else they should be provided for by a system of superannuation such as is already proposed, and for which a Bill is being drafted.

In connection with this, the scale of salaries in another column is of interest. Mr. Holland, M.P., advised nurses to have a union of their own, such as a labour union. The nurses already have in their Association a body which, if they joined it and took the proper interest in it, should be able to do for them what the Medical Association does for its members, and there should be no necessity for any other form of union.

Time off duty for nurses was discussed. The Minister in charge of Hospitals announced that he was prepared to institute a six days' week for nurses. This, we think, should be done as soon as it is possible to so augment the staffs of the hospitals that the needs of the patients can be attended to. One day's rest in seven should be the right of everyone. Unfortunately, unlike offices and business places, hospitals cannot be closed once a week, and therefore a large relieving staff will be necessary. This day's rest is an idea which we must strive to reach.

In this connection the following extract from the "Evening Post" (Wellington), of September 3rd, is of interest:—

"Several members made complaint in the House of Representatives on Friday with regard to the hours and pay of trainees for the nursing profession. The Minister of Public Health (Hon. C. J. Parr), in reply, said that he was aware that there were complaints from trainees and their relatives. He was inclined to think, from his survey of the position, that there was some substance in the complaint. He was satisfied that the young trainees were asked to give too long hours to work and lectures. They were called upon to work seven days a week for as much as eight hours a day. The time had come when it should not be necessary to make a demand such as this in the inter-