

Over there in a corner of the room is an urchin of nine, a burglar in miniature. He has a round, bullet head, with small twinkling black eyes, cherry red cheeks, and a prominent jaw. He is stout and thick-set, and his proud mother, to accentuate his characteristics, has dressed him in tight-fitting knitted suit, with a felonious-looking red handkerchief round his throat. He wears a burglarious cap down over his left eye, and only needs a short black pipe to complete the picture of a juvenile "Bill Sykes," though juvenility is not a striking feature of his appearance. His right eye is well blackened, probably in a street fight, on which occasion we may be quite sure that his adversary got at least as good as he gave. His arm is in a cotton sling, and altogether his appearance is such that if he were put into the Old Bailey dock the judge might well sentence him there and then in his youth, and unheard, to fourteen years' penal servitude; and we are sure no one would be found to plead innocence or to question the justice of his sentence.

Just now he is standing up steadily, with his legs wider apart than a natural bow necessitates, and with his available fist manfully doubled, is recounting to a group of admiring youngsters, probably his history of the fight which lately incapacitated him. All of a sudden he waxes wrath at the recollection, and, without warning, begins to pitch right and left into those members of his audience who, in their eagerness to hear, have brought their faces in dangerous proximity with his knuckles. As if he cannot keep down his exasperation, he deals with strict impartiality blows all round until the place is in an uproar. Astonished and indignant mothers rush to the rescue of their unoffending offspring, and the young rascal is borne off in the arms of a porter, who finds his duty of ejectment in this instance by no means a sinecure.

She who has been unfortunate enough to produce such a specimen of humanity does her best to allay the pangs of his small victims, and wipes the tears from their belaboured faces while in a dismal tone she bewails her own fate. She describes how this, her eldest born, is the terror of the neighbourhood. He rarely goes to school, but spends the day in fighting, breaking windows, and other sportive atrocities, until her life is a constant round of complaints and threats. As he is one too many for his school-mistress she does not make it her duty to see that he attends school with due regularity, or to inquire into the cause of his frequent absences. On the contrary, it is a matter of satisfaction to her to miss his forbidding young countenance from her class, for his idea of education is to measure fists with his neighbours, calculate the number of black eyes he will make ere the sun sets, write abusive and insulting epithets by slatefuls, and practically to decline the verb "to fight" in its past, present, and future tenses, until a third of his fellow-scholars are in tears.

Perhaps the poor mother does not get so much sympathy as her condition deserves, for there is hardly a woman among her audience who is not convinced but that if he were hers "she'd soon see about it; she'd make him mind his 'p's and q's,'" the latter a very rash statement, as, having never got further in his alphabet than the letter D, he would find it difficult to distinguish which were his p's and which his q's.

The last baby having been examined, diagnosed, and prescribed for, we must depart with the rest, promising ourselves another and an early visit.

Royal British Nurses' Association.

(Incorporated by Royal Charter.)



We have received a number of letters lately from influential Matrons expressing their desire to resign their membership of the Association, and we therefore think it advisable this week to state our views upon this subject to our fellow members.

Our advice is—DO NOT RESIGN.

Glance back, and you will see that the great cause—co-operation, for professional organisation and in consequence the greater efficiency in the nursing of the sick—for which your Association was founded still remains a cause which cannot be won without opposition, trouble and firmness of purpose. In looking back you will remember that in the past your Association has been unjustly attacked, vilified in the press; your motives have been misrepresented—indeed from the day of its birth the career of the Association has been one long struggle. To those members who during the past seven years have borne the heat and burden of the day with so much courage, we would say—Do not desert your cause until you have tried every means of maintaining it which your conscience will allow. If you disapprove of the present management, try to alter it; do not, by the weak policy of "scuttle," leave known wrongs unredressed. If you act from a conscientious sense of duty, steadfastness and truth are sure to win in the end.

It is quite natural that indignation should be felt at the policy which has forced off from your governing body the women to whom you had promised permanent seats thereon, and which has practically refused you any opportunity in General Meeting of re-wording the Bye-law which made such action possible; but we are of opinion—and we feel sure that the Matrons retiring from the Council will agree with us—that until the members have had an opportunity of voting upon the question, it would be unwise to take any hasty step, which would injure your professional Association, by withdrawing your support at this critical period of its history.

Instead of resigning, we must firmly determine that the business of the Association shall be conducted in order, that the Association shall not spend more than its assured income, and that equal rights shall be accorded to each member. If, in the future, we fail to obtain these just demands, it will then be time enough to discuss resignation. But even then, severance with an Association does not mean desertion of the principles upon which it was founded. If one organization fails to accomplish our aim, we may be quite sure that so long as the Cause is just, there are other means by which the same ends can be attained.

The Royal British Nurses' Association, incorporated by Royal Charter, has the right and the powers, if it chooses to exert them, to carry out all the necessary organization for Nursing reform, and to obtain for Nurses that legal status which is their right. If the Association fails in this duty, there can be no doubt that some other body will step forward, take its place, carry out its programme, and obtain the consequent power and prestige.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)