

The Nursing Record

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EDITORIAL.

SHOULD trained nurses be registered by law? That is a question which is now agitating the minds of many, and which, we doubt not, will well repay some careful consideration in these columns. We invite our readers to express their views freely and fully upon the matter, and cordially promise all sides an equally impartial hearing. Our own ideas are necessarily broad and clear, formed as they are from an unprejudiced survey of the subject from many different standpoints. To concentrate all the information we have received, and all the conclusions we have arrived at upon this point in our leading article, would be not only difficult, but would at the present stage be of little service to our audience. We therefore propose to-day, merely to touch the fringe of the question we have asked, by discussing shortly the positions taken up for and against it, affirmative and negative in their answers.

On the one side, therefore, we find a new but already powerful association, founded by the heads of the medical and nursing professions, which places in the very fore-front of its intended work its intention to seek for a Royal Charter to legalise

registration. In other words, the only united body of nurses in existence expresses its firm and unanimous conviction that registration is necessary and good for themselves, and must be secured without delay. We turn to medical men, and find their acknowledged leaders in no uncertain words stating an absolutely identical opinion, while the leading medical journal, the *Lancet*, is almost week by week wielding its enormous influence to forward the same views. Public opinion is visibly and beyond doubt moving with greater and greater power in the same direction.

Her Majesty the Queen, with unexampled and unequalled powers of rightly estimating popular feeling, transfers a great and historic gift from the women of England, to provide trained nurses for the sick poor in her metropolitan towns. Merchant princes give freely, even to a fanciful scheme, in the hope that it will benefit trained nurses. And yet a great and exceeding bitter cry is rising in increasing strength from the public and their medical attendants that any woman, however ignorant, careless, or bad, can to-day call herself and pretend to act as a trained nurse without the slightest qualification or right to the title, and yet without the slightest let or hindrance from any one, though causing infinite harm and misery to the sick, and infinite disgrace and disrepute to the members of a most noble profession.

Now the very essence and secret of journalistic success, and of the power of the Press, is that the members of the fourth estate are obliged by their calling to know the thoughts of the multitude, and to express them tersely in black and white, and it is absolutely evident to us, from the examples we have given, from opinions heard on all sides in social circles and gleaned from papers representing every shade of thought, that public opinion is rapidly maturing upon this matter and will shortly be expressed in most unmistakable fashion in a positive demand that, for the good of the nation at large and for the sake of its sick in particular, there must be some certain and speedy method adopted of distinguishing the trained from the untrained nurse. As our contemporary, *The Lancet*, put it in the article which we reprinted in our columns last week,

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