

THE REGISTRATION OF NURSES.

THE following leading article, which appeared last week in our influential contemporary the *Standard*, conclusively proves the interest which this subject is now exciting in the public mind, and the opinion formed by authoritative and unprejudiced laymen, as to the certainty of the success of this great movement initiated by the British Nurses' Association.

"The Princess Christian presided over a meeting of the British Nurses' Association, held at the residence of Mrs. Jeune, for the purpose of furthering certain objects which are of no small importance, both to the Medical profession and the general public. Up till now, the widely-practised occupation of Nursing has possessed no recognised legal *status*; and those engaged in the work of tending the sick have been bound together by no regular professional ties, such as those which exist for Physicians and Surgeons, and even for Chemists. The inconveniences caused to the public by such a state of things are by no means trifling, for the practical result of the present system is often to place them entirely at the mercy of chance in regard to those whose ministrations are needed in cases of injury or disease. Since it is not in human nature for men so long as they are well to prepare for a time of sickness, it happens that when illness comes it comes as a surprise, and has to be met at a moment's notice. On most occasions, no doubt, those who require such aid know personally or by reputation some Medical man, and have, therefore, little difficulty in procuring professional assistance in case of sudden indisposition; and even supposing that they are away from home and in a strange place, they are always able to feel that by summoning a regular and duly qualified practitioner they have secured the attendance of a man possessed of sufficient knowledge and skill to prevent harm, rather than benefit, ensuing from his advice. The chances are a thousand to one against the Doctor being either utterly incapable or dishonest. If, however, in the emergency we have supposed, it is also necessary to engage a trained and properly qualified Nurse, no such help is to be obtained. It is impossible, when a sick-room attendant has been heard of, to judge of her qualifications by inquiring whether or not she possesses any certificate which, on the face of it, proves her ability to take the management of a difficult case. The Nurse may, in reality, have been trained in some excellent philanthropic or benevolent Institution; but this fact, when stated, will not convey much information to an ordinary member of the public, who cannot be expected to know anything of the merits of this or that semi-private establishment

to which a reference is given. It thus happens that, for what is almost as important a calling as that of medicine, there is no criterion by which to judge capacity; and a woman, useless, inefficient, and entirely untrained, may represent herself as capable of the highest forms of nursing, and may thus get the charge of invalids, who will run the greatest possible risks from her ignorance and incapacity.

"To put an end, as speedily as possible, to a system which, it must be admitted, reflects no great credit on our existing organisation of the forces employed to combat disease, the British Nurses' Association was formed, at the end of the year 1887. The practical object of this body, which now includes two thousand three hundred out of the fifteen thousand Nurses of the United Kingdom, as expressed in the words of Dr. Bedford Fenwick, one of the speakers at the meeting, is to induce the State to give the Members of the Association 'the same recognition in respect of Registration that sixty years ago was granted to the Medical profession.' That is, the Association desires to obtain a Royal Charter, which will enable it to grant a certificate, and to confer on those whom it regards as qualified to undertake the work of Nursing a *status* which no unauthorised person will be able to usurp. The Register upon which would be entered the names of all Nurses held to be sufficiently instructed would be printed and publicly sold, and thus, to quote Dr. Bedford Fenwick again, every Medical man would have the advantage of being able to know whether 'he could rely upon the Nurse who had been called in to attend his patient.' In addition to the advantages which the public and the Doctors would secure by being able to ascertain at once the qualifications of any particular Nurse, a combination such as that which the British Nurses' Association desires to establish would produce many other very useful results. Unquestionably the granting of the right to be on the Register only to such Nurses as could show that they had been properly trained would tend to raise the general level of technical knowledge, and to improve in every way the social and intellectual condition of the whole profession. To introduce a feeling of *esprit de corps* among any body of men or women is to greatly increase its efficiency, and on that ground alone the public should look with favour on the new movement. Not less important, however, than the placing on record the names of all persons duly qualified to attend the sick, and the establishment of a community of interest among the Nurses, are the schemes for more material assistance which the success of the Association will render possible. In the first place, it is proposed to provide Convalescent Homes for

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