

Nursing Politics.

THE REGISTRATION OF ASYLUM ATTENDANTS AS NURSES.

MISS LILLIE WADDINGTON, Matron of the Bootle Hospital, writes:—

"I sent a registered letter addressed to the General Council of the Royal British Nurses' Association, with a request that it should be read before them at the meeting on January 8th. Two days afterwards I received a letter from the acting Secretary stating it had been brought before that body, but its reading and consideration were referred to the Special Subcommittee.

When letters are sent expressly for the purpose of being put before the Governing Body, it is, I consider, both wrong and unjust to withhold them. In a contention of any kind, it is always a wiser course to allow both sides equal play. The truth of a matter is more quickly and thoroughly grasped when light, in the shape of opinions, is thrown from two opposite directions. We may compare the question to a picture hung on a wall, placed between two gas jets. We light one gas jet, and in the soft, half shaded light we think the picture is perfect. Whilst admiring it, someone comes in and lights the gas jet on the other side. We start back and exclaim, 'Is it the same picture? Surely, no.' The one who shed the light replies, 'Ah, surely yes, it is the same picture, the defects and imperfections you now perceive previously existed, but were not observable in the half light, whereas now you have light emanating from both sides, which enables you to see the picture as it is, rudely deprived of the pretty soft colouring lent to it from the one side light only. You may now, in the full glare of both lights, criticize it fairly and with justice.'

The question of enrolling mental attendants on the Association of Trained Nurses is like the picture—full of defects when viewed in the full light. There are but two ways of accomplishing things—a *right* and a *wrong* way. Hence the very fact of withholding letters for the reading and consideration of a few, which were meant for the whole, is in itself sufficient to point out a weakness somewhere, and we may be very sure when once that becomes apparent, injustice and error are not far behind.

I cannot understand why the letters were not read for the consideration of the General Council as requested, and I certainly think it the height of injustice and tyranny on the part of the originators of the scheme in question, to force their views on other members of the Council, without also stating the views of those who are protesting. Apart from 'the few' the other members of the Council are not given the means of knowing the different aspect the scheme assumes when viewed under other lights. The reason is, as was proved from the printed report of the General Council Meeting on January 8th, that the whole thing is dealt with unfairly and unjustly, and with an evident determination to shut out the light, and leads one to think that the majority of the members who were present are merely regarded as puppets.

But I am of opinion that this matter of the suppress-

sion of our letters should not rest here. Those members who, like myself, sent letters to be read to the members of the General Council, and which were withheld, ought to insist that their views should be brought before their fellow-members. I would therefore venture to suggest to any member whose letter was withheld on the 8th inst., that she should write to the Journal Committee, and request that her letter to the General Council should be inserted in the next issue of our official organ, the *Nurses' Journal*. To insure insertion, such letters must reach the office of the Association by the 1st of February.

We all know and must admit that mental attendants, who are trained in 'their own special work,' are only half trained Nurses, when compared with the fully trained general Nurse. And those who disagree with this, either cannot or will not see the truth."

LETTERS OF PROTEST.

The spontaneous opinion of Matrons and Nurses on the Mental Nurse question is exemplified by the response to Miss Wingfield's appeal to her colleagues. 215 Matrons and Nurses signed and returned her Resolution of Protest—many adding letters of disapproval—out of the 300 members addressed, whilst she only received six dubious replies.

The fact reported at the General Council Meeting, on the 8th inst., that eighteen letters of protest had been received, and only *one* in favour of the scheme, is indisputable proof of the feeling of the independent members of the Association on the question.

Mr. Edward Fardon, Medical Hon. Secretary, stated at the General Council Meeting on the 8th inst. *re* the Mental Nurse question:—"That no formal scheme had yet been prepared on the subject."

In the *Nurses' Journal* for November, 1896, a Report is printed embodying "a formal scheme," which was presented by a Sub-committee to the General Council on October 16th, and adopted by that body without the opinion of the members of the Corporation having been invited. *It was therefore decided by the General Council* to admit Mental Nurses to Registration and membership of the Association under the following conditions:—

(a) That no Mental Nurse shall be deemed eligible for admission as a member unless he or she has had three years' training in a recognised Lunatic Asylum or Hospital for the Insane, containing not less than forty beds, or has had two years in such Hospital or Asylum, and one year in a General Hospital, and can produce such proof of professional education and moral character as the Council may prescribe.

(b) Application for admission to the membership shall be made upon a special form provided for the purpose according to the Charter.

(c) That the names of Asylum-trained Nurses shall be placed on the Register with the word '*Mental*' in brackets after each, to distinguish them from the

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