

## Nursing Politics.

### THE MENTAL NURSE QUESTION.

THE Editor of *Asylum News* has done well to cut out the acrimonious remarks made by Sir James Crichton-Browne in his address at the annual meeting of the Association of Asylum Workers, on those nurse members of the Royal British Nurses' Association who disapprove of his conduct. The following paragraph, which we take from *Asylum News* echoes faintly the tone of Sir James's remarks:—

#### "MISREPRESENTATIONS.

"During the last two years I have heard you spoken of—I mean asylum nurses and attendants—more than once, in terms of undisguised contempt. You have been described as the scum of the nursing world, and pronounced utterly unworthy to be placed in the same category with the trained hospital nurse. At another time and place I shall perhaps have an opportunity of answering fully these strictures, and of showing that they proceed from crass ignorance or overweening conceit. But in the meantime I would impress upon you the importance of steadily maintaining your claim to be regarded as a branch—aye! the highest branch—of the great nursing profession, and to meet on equal terms with those who are engaged in corporeal nursing, and at the same time of so perfecting your training that there may be no ground for criticism."

Sir James is getting on, and in heading this paragraph "misrepresentations" we think he aptly describes his remarks. In spite of his bitterness against those trained nurses who had the common sense and courage to oppose his proposition in 1896, that male and female asylum attendants without hospital training should be admitted as members of the hospital trained nurses Association "and have the same status in the Association," and that these untrained persons should be placed upon the "trained nurses register," Sir James Crichton-Browne and his colleagues have not yet dared to take this irretrievable and dangerous step.

BEFORE the large majority of asylum attendants can justly claim the right to the title of "Mental Nurse" their practical training and experience must be very much more thorough than it is at present. The standard both of education and knowledge, which qualifies for the certificate of the Medico-Psychological Association being extremely elementary, we advise asylum attendants not to be satisfied with the meagre curriculum at present placed by asylum authorities at their disposal. They will be wise to ask for greater facilities, for both practical and theoretical experience in the science of nursing, and Sir James Crichton-Browne with his intolerance of women's abilities, and his determined attempt to depreciate the status of the hospital trained nurse, will be the very last person to encourage them in this advantageous course.

BUT one thing is absolutely certain. Should Sir James Crichton Browne and his fellow Hon. Officers of the Royal British Nurses' Association succeed in lowering the standard for Registration of our Chartered Corporation, by placing persons on its register who have not fulfilled the prescribed regulations which have been in force for seven years—namely, that a nurse should have had three years training in hospitals for the sick—the course of three years' trained and certificated nurses is quite clear. They must arrange to have a register of their own, upon which the names only of those trained nurses who have attained the highest standard after examination will appear. This register will be issued to protect the public and trained nurses from the dangers of bogus registers, upon which would be thrust the names of persons who are untrained, according to the standard defined by leading Hospital Matrons and their Nursing Staffs.

INDEED, there is little doubt that should the new bye-laws drawn up by the sub-committee, composed entirely of the Hon. Officers of the Royal British Nurses' Association, come into force, a great impetus will be given to the demand for State Registration of Nurses, and that trained nurses will receive warm support from many sections of the public, in their demand for efficient education, both theoretical and practical, public examination by an unbiased body, and registration by Act of Parliament. This would be a bold and honourable policy on the part of the Matrons and Nurses, who decline any longer to be associated with the present Hon. Officers of the Royal British Nurses' Association, or to be subject in a professional sense to their unscrupulous intimidation. It must be remembered that any tyranny can be enforced when the members of the Executive Committee no longer hold ex-officio seats, but merely sit as puppets of the officials. This must be the policy of the future, and if a whole-hearted and conscientious energy is brought to bear on the accomplishment of these just reforms, the most unscrupulous obstructive policy in the world must give way in time. The question is, have the dissentient members the strength of conviction, the courage, and the power of endurance, to fight against long odds in a great cause?

In spite of all that has passed, we have absolute faith that all these qualities will be found in those women who are prepared and anxious to sever their connection with an Association, the Hon. Officers of which have trampled truth, gratitude, and honour in the dust, and have brought our great profession into contempt in the eyes of all honourable persons; and, moreover, have done more by their grave injustice to

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