

## The A, B, C of State Registration.

By Miss SOPHIA PALMER.

It would seem as if every nurse in the land must, after all that has been said and written, understand the reasons for State registration, and comprehend something of how such registration will affect the nurse already in practice, but we frequently hear from or talk with nurses who we realise have failed to grasp, even in the most elementary manner, the reasons for this great movement, and when we consider the apathy and indifference of the thousands of nurses in this country upon the subject, we are moved to again present the matter for the benefit of the uninformed.

The history of trained nursing, as we look back upon it, shows an almost phenomenal growth. When it commenced in the United States—and we will not take time to go back out of our own country, there were comparatively few hospitals, and they were situated in the great cities. The hospitals were large, and the opportunities for practical observation gave an intelligent woman great experience, even without much systematic instruction. A training-school was found to be an economic investment, and as hospitals multiplied in large cities and small, in towns and villages, training-schools have multiplied, every school being a law unto itself as to the amount of actual nursing education it shall give to its pupils in return for their services to the hospital.

In the beginning nurses were few, they were scattered, they were without organisation, and, being without voice in the matter of the education of nurses, they did not concern themselves about it. Gradually, as the numbers have increased and societies have been organised, a professional feeling has developed. Nurses in small groups in many parts of the world have concerned themselves about the inequality of the nurse's education and her lack of legal status.

Those nurses who have been the superintendents of training-schools realised first and more fully the inequality of training in this multitude of schools, and the injustice of such inequality to a vast army of pupils. Training-schools are called educational institutions, but educational institutions of every other class must conform to a standard fixed in some way by the law of the State. Universities, high schools, grammar and private schools must give to their pupils a certain minimum amount of instruction, the standard for which is fixed in some way by law. But the training-school is responsible to no higher authority as regards what it shall teach or how it shall teach. Now, by State registration every nurse after she shall have graduated from a training-school will be required to pass another examination fixed by the State before she will be allowed to practise nursing. By this means

all of the training-schools in that State will be obliged to provide for their pupils the kind of instruction both theoretical and practical that will be necessary to enable them to pass the State examination.

By this means it is very plain that all of the training-schools will become more uniform, as they must adopt a certain minimum curriculum which will be compulsory for schools of the lower grade, but will not retard the development of schools of the higher grade, so it is easily seen that by State registration the first great point gained will be a certain fixed standard of training to which all of the training-schools of the State must conform.

In other words, the law of the State will decide the very least that a nurse must know in order to be considered competent to care for the sick. Right here let us emphasise the point that a law never works backward; for instance, if a Bill pass the Legislature requiring that all women practising nursing after January 1st, 1904, shall pass an examination and be registered, such a law will not affect nurses who are already graduated and in practice; such women will only be required, before a fixed date, to register their diplomas without taking an examination.

This is exactly the manner in which the medical registration went into effect. Such an enactment, when secured, will be the first step towards placing trained nursing upon the basis of a recognised profession, and this object alone should be enough to rouse the interest and enthusiasm of every woman who has the right to call herself a nurse.

The direct advantages which will be felt by the passage of such a law will be that women who are practising nursing without a diploma will not have the right to call themselves trained nurses. The public will be protected from being imposed upon by such women as Jane Toppan and Miss Dingle, although the public will have the privilege of employing such women, knowing them to be untrained, if it so chooses.

This movement for State registration is a purely educational one; it is the first great concerted effort of nurses for the advancement, elevation and protection of the nurses of the future; it practically brings nothing to the nurses who are leading the movement in the different States; they have nothing to gain personally in return for the time and hard labour which they are giving to the cause. Most of them are women who have given their best years to nursing work, and who have learned by hard, practical experience where and how nursing methods are deficient and in what way improvements and protection can be obtained. But for the apathy of the great multitude of nurses engaged in private practice, the very nurses who are to be most greatly benefited by the successful issue of the registration movement, this whole question of State registration would be carried with but little difficulty.

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