

schools, or in the service of the Empire all over the world, new spheres of usefulness are opening to nurses, while a rising standard of skill and knowledge is required of them. She goes on to show that:—

"The profession is, as regards its internal organisation, in a state of chaos and confusion. It has no governing body; no standard of training; no corporate existence. Every hospital, whatever its size and standing, is a self-constituted training-school. Each works as a separate unit, carries out its own theories of training, and confers its own certificate. A woman who has been two years in a small cottage hospital, six months in a lying-in hospital, or some such specialised institution, will emerge from it as legitimately a 'nurse' as a woman who to her three years in a general hospital has added experience in fever and obstetric wards, and passed through the courses of theoretical instruction in bacteriology, physiology, and sanitary science, which form part of the training in many of our large institutions.

"In these latter hospitals the period and character of the training are more or less assimilated; but even in their case the terms and conditions of service are very varied. Everything depends on the Matron. She can curtail or lengthen the period of probation; she can so arrange the work that her nurses will pass successively through the medical, surgical, and other wards, gathering all kinds of experience; or she may so legislate that her nurses will leave the hospital having seen but one department of work, and remain therefore practically untrained in every other important direction. The certificate earned in either case will be of precisely the same value, will carry the same consideration, and entitle its recipient to the same remuneration. As a result, the prizes of the profession are distributed haphazard among the fully trained and partially trained. Private nursing institutions, from which the general public draw their nurses, are staffed with nurses of every kind and degree of training, the one point of similarity being reserved for the fees they demand."

The writer proceeds to show that, though in few other walks of life is the worthiness as well as the fitness of the individual so professionally important, it is the one calling without a recognised standard of capacity and without the means of enforcing discipline.

"The legal and medical professions can, through their Councils, insist on a certain level of attainment, and they have the power of enacting disciplinary measures. Neither lawyers, doctors, chartered accountants, nor chemists and druggists can enter the fold except by the legitimate door. Once within, they must accept and adopt the professional ethics of their order.

"Nurses alone are perfectly irresponsible to any authority; their professional skill is vouched for by no recognised certificate, and, though the scope of their influence for good or ill is far greater than that of any medical attendant, there is no Council behind them to safeguard the interests of the public, and no fear of professional shipwreck to deter them from unprofessional conduct.

"But this state of affairs, if unfair to the public, is equally injurious to the prospects of a fully-trained nurse, whose career is hampered by a competition founded on the absence of all tests which the public

can understand, and who must, therefore, compete in the same market, for the same remuneration, with nurses who have had a minimum of training and experience."

While dealing with this question the writer points out the ease with which nursing associations can put an inferior article on the market, and the growing tendency of county associations to employ six months' trained nurses. She proceeds:—

"The object of registration, however, is not to hinder the employment of such nurses—for there is ample room for the work of every grade of nurse, from the invaluable mother's help to the fully-trained and scientific Sister—but merely to insist that it shall be made perfectly clear that the former stand on a totally different professional footing from the fully-trained and experienced nurse. . . . Both types are needed in different spheres of work, but their departments should be clearly defined and easily distinguished.

. . . . This can only be secured by establishing a register for the fully-trained nurses, and by according to those on the register a definite and distinguishing title. Such a register need not arrest the supply of a cheap order of home helps, capable of nursing chronic cases, but should rather tend to open up new spheres of usefulness for such women.

"The classification of nurses, through the registration of the higher order, would force the untrained or partially-trained competitor out of the upper ranks of the profession, and in seeking an outlet for their energies they would form a different class of sick attendants, who would necessarily demand a lower remuneration for their services, and be available for all those innumerable cases of chronic disease or special infirmity in which the patient only asks to be made comfortable, and to be given a helping hand in the work of the household."

The writer further shows that in the hand-to-hand battle with disease

"the day is often turned by the skill, or want of skill, of the nurse. As a community, therefore, we cannot afford to look with indifference on the disorganisation of the profession, and on its consequent inability to enlist the best available material. The public need the best, and, if it can only be obtained through State Registration, we should co-operate with nurses in securing such a measure as will place the profession on a better and more stable foundation."

In reference to the need for a Central Board, the writer points out that its duties would be to lay down conditions of service, and authorise a definite training, to maintain the register, to enforce disciplinary measures when necessary, and incidentally to secure a better all-round training for nurses.

In conclusion, there is a warning that the attainment of Registration will not be an easy matter:—

"As a nation we dislike organisation, and any interference with the natural course of things; we have not yet brought ourselves to accept the necessity for the organisation of our educational system, and we have lately been supplied with painful evidence of our national inability to enforce good administration even in our public departments."

All this is true. We must put our shoulders to the wheel and work with a will.

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