



Letters to the Editor.

NOTES, QUERIES, &c.

Whilst cordially inviting communications upon all subjects for these columns, we wish it to be distinctly understood that we do not IN ANY WAY hold ourselves responsible for the opinions expressed by our correspondents.

THE BURNING QUESTION OF REGISTRATION.

To the Editor of the "British Journal of Nursing."

MADAM.—There is a distinct danger that the present "strife of tongues" raging round the question of "State Registration for Nurses" is tending to confuse the rank and file of the nursing world.

It is decidedly bewildering to that large majority of nurses who have neither time to study the matter fully for themselves, nor opportunity of obtaining advice on the opposing opinions so freely expressed in the various nursing papers—even supposing the nurses are interested enough to purchase the opposing journals every week or month, as the case may be. To find two Bills before Parliament seeking to promote State Registration in different ways, to have two widely-circulated manifestoes for and against the principle of Registration itself, and, finally, to have a third party approving of Registration and yet disapproving of the present Bills designed to obtain it, are enough to make the average nurse, for whose benefit this conflict is being waged, give up the whole question in despair. Perhaps it may help some to narrow the whole question to a more or less personal issue, in order that each nurse may approach it from her own standpoint.

The reason of the movement lies in a nutshell. Are the general public, the employers of trained nurses, satisfied with the present supply? Reluctantly the answer must be "No." Therefore, the reason of this dissatisfaction must be sought, and a remedy found.

The promoters of State Registration affirm that the creation of a Register, under the control of a Central Board with administrative and disciplinary powers, will protect both the public and qualified nurses against the undesirable persons now practising under false pretences of proper training.

The opponents of State Registration affirm such a Register would tend to eliminate many excellent workers and afford no protection whatever against clever persons without the moral attributes essential for good nurses.

Every nurse should be able to answer three questions:—

1. What is State Registration?
2. How will it affect me?
3. What are the present difficulties?

1. "State Registration" means obtaining by Act of Parliament the protection of the law for those who are qualified to call themselves "registered nurses." Both the Bills now before Parliament define "registered nurses" as those who can produce evidence of satisfactory training (one Bill stating for three years in hospital wards, the other three years' training evidenced by certificates) and pass an examination instituted by the Central Board or Council. Both Bills also ask

that any person pretending to be a registered nurse, and acting as such, may be punished by fine or imprisonment.

In both Bills the central authority is given power to suspend a nurse or remove her name from the Register for disobeying the rules, or other misconduct.

Thus it is sought to ensure that only properly-trained persons may be registered, and thus protect the public who employ them, and the nurses themselves, from unqualified persons, and, further, to remove from the Register such nurses as are guilty of misconduct.

2. How will State Registration affect nurses now at work?

In addition to those who hold their hospital certificate, there are a large number who, for good and sufficient reasons, did not fulfil the full term of hospital training and yet are excellent nurses.

There are many others who gained wide experience in passing from one institution to another, whether as "paying probationers" or otherwise, who must also be considered.

It is not intended that this Act should in any way apply to or prejudice those whose nursing experience has been gained entirely outside hospital or infirmary wards.

Such nurses are absolutely untouched by the proposed regulations, and are free to work as they will, provided they do not claim to be "registered nurses"; but they are not eligible for the proposed Register.

For hospital-trained nurses both Bills provide a time of grace, in which every nurse may decide whether she will apply for registration or not.

One Bill states the qualifications to be three years' certificate from approved hospital, and good character, or evidence of satisfactory training, and three years in *bond-fide* practice as a nurse, and good character.

The other Bill states:—Two years' recognised certificate, or satisfactory evidence of *bond-fide* practice as trained nurse and good character. A registration fee would be charged, but there would be no examination.

Thus, under neither Bill would any hardship be inflicted on the present working nurses, so the consideration of the whole matter may be approached without personal bias.

3. The present difficulties are two-fold—

First—The strong reasons urged for and against the principle of State Registration.

Second—The methods proposed in the present Bills.

(1) The reasons urged in favour of Registration are, briefly:—

The institution of a central body to fix the minimum course of training, and to maintain a professional standard and common rules of discipline in the nursing profession.

The protection of the public from fraudulent and unscrupulous exploiters of half-trained or untrained persons trading as fully qualified nurses.

The protection of nurses who have given time and money to learn their profession thoroughly and find themselves competing for a livelihood in the same market for the same remuneration as those who have only spent a few months in the work.

That an examination for admittance on the Register would satisfy the public and medical men that

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