

as she desired to make some corrections in her evidence as printed.

The two hours was principally occupied in taking the evidence of Miss Amy Hughes, who made an excellent witness, sticking to her points, and refusing to be "drawn." We hope to devote space to this evidence in our next issue.

DR. BEDFORD FENWICK was recalled, in order that he might contradict certain statements made by Mr. Sydney Holland, which were most inaccurate and misleading. On July 14th, Mr. Holland stated that the question of Registration "had already been twice discussed before important bodies"—"twice discussed by people who gave it full consideration, and it was refused." That statement was simply untrue. The Select Committee of the House of Lords was appointed in 1890 to inquire into the Metropolitan Hospitals; quite incidentally, they heard four or five witnesses concerning the work of the Royal British Nurses' Association and the need for Registration of Nurses. When Lord Sandhurst, as Chairman, drafted the Report of the Committee, he put in the following clause: "Your Committee consider that the arguments in favour of the Registration of Nurses outweigh those against it; and they recommend that the Charter desired by two Associations should be granted." It was pointed out to the Committee that at that moment the whole question was *sub judice*, as the petition for a Royal Charter for the Nurses' Association was before the Privy Council; and that the Committee had not heard full evidence for and against the question. By six votes to two, the Lords' Committee therefore decided to express no opinion on the matter. If they had disapproved of Registration they would doubtless have said so. Mr. Holland had no justification, therefore, for his assertion that the Lords' Committee "decided not to grant the Registration of Nurses."

Secondly, Mr. Holland asserted that the Nurses' Association asked for a Charter, and for "State Registration of Nurses under their Charter," and that "the Privy Council refused it." Those statements were entirely untrue. The Association asked for a Royal Charter, and, amongst the objects of the Association, stated that it kept a *voluntary* list or register of nurses. A strong Committee of the Privy Council heard the case. All the arguments now advanced against Registration were much more strongly advanced by Sir Richard Webster (now the Lord Chief Justice), and were controverted by Sir Horace (now Lord) Davey on behalf of the Association. There was no question or suggestion of State Registration. Indeed, Lord Davey pointed out that that could only be given by Act of Parliament. The Privy Council granted the Royal Charter, and did *not* "refuse it." Consequently, Mr. Holland's statement was entirely devoid of foundation and most misleading.

Is this playing the game?

We are asked by Miss Isla Stewart to emphatically contradict the statement, made in the *Hospital* newspaper on the 16th inst., concerning her evidence before the Select Committee on Nursing: "Nurses under the Poor Law, she was understood to say, would be excluded from the working of the scheme." Miss Stewart never said any such thing.

As this unfounded report is being utilised as an argument against Registration by those who desire to prevent nurses from having legal status, Miss Stewart desires that equal prominence should be given to her

denial of the statement. A nurse's eligibility for Registration would depend, of course, not on whether she received her training in a hospital or Poor Law infirmary, but whether that institution maintained the prescribed standard of education, and whether she herself satisfied the General Nursing Council that she had attained the required standard.

### The Registration Situation as Seen by a Looker-on.

It is more than surprising—it is astonishing—in this controversy over State Registration, to see how many people entirely fail to see the point, fail to grasp the real issue. In this exaggerated and perfectly futile discussion over the bugaboo of how to register moral character, the difficulties are made to loom so large in the foreground that the genuine and crying need for what was originally asked is entirely overlooked.

What is it that nurses are asking? They are asking the State to define and protect a minimum limit of professional education for the nurse. Is it not possible for the State to do this? It is possible, as proved by the legislation which protects—let us not say the education of the physician, since that is a red rag to many, but—the education of the teacher, of the veterinarian, of the plumber.

What will be the advantage of thus defining and protecting a minimum limit of education?

The advantage will be that the rejected probationer cannot call herself a graduate nurse; that the pupil who has been dismissed from a reputable hospital for unfitness cannot declare herself to be a graduate from that very hospital, as she now does; that the woman trained in six months' fever work, in one year's special hospital work, or in six weeks' correspondence school, cannot falsely claim to be a fully-trained nurse. Need this prevent these women from being employed? Certainly not. If people wish to employ them they will be at full liberty to do so, and some people prefer nurses of this kind. Some physicians prefer them, and there is no reason why they should not have them. But let them employ them for what they are. It is precisely the same as the commercial quarrel over oleo-margarine and butter. Some people like oleo-margarine. Let them have it, but let the people who prefer butter have butter. Is it not deception to give them oleo-margarine instead? And is it not a gross injustice to leave the women who have arduously followed their full hospital course of three years without protection against impostors and sham imitations of the grossest type?

Why should any woman submit herself to three years' arduous study when she sees medical men and members of society actually interested in safeguarding and protecting the half-taught, the half-trained woman? It is an unheard-of absurdity.

Then, further, the most important fact of all—

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)