

## Progress of State Registration.

A letter on the State Registration of Nurses in the current issue of *Asylums News*, dated from the Darenth Asylum, and signed "A. L. P.," is the most sensible contribution to the discussion of this important subject which we have seen in that journal. Dealing with the question from the point of view of the male mental attendant, the writer insists on the necessity for training in sick nursing as well as in the care of mental diseases, and asserts that a mental nurse is "sure to come in contact with cases requiring the attention of a skilled sick nurse in the course of a few months' practice. Physical collapse, with perhaps organic complications, frequently follows an attack of acute mania, and the mental nurse who is not fully qualified to meet this, or any other emergency which may arise, will be of little value to the doctor under whom he may be nursing, and will do little to forward the cause of the male nurse." He pleads, therefore, for adequate training for the male staff of asylums, and appeals to nurses and attendants to put their shoulder to the wheel, and to prove by their zeal and devotion that they are worthy of a place in the foremost ranks of the nursing profession. This is the right spirit.

The same journal contains a letter from Mr. M. C. Walshe, advocating the introduction of a Registration Bill into Parliament by the Asylum Workers' Association. The more Bills the better. They will but prove the widespread demand for legislation; but we think Mr. Walshe's statement that in the earlier Registration Bills the mental nurses were entirely ignored is due to a misconception. This was not the case; but it was felt, as in the case of other special branches of work not definitely represented on the Board, that mental nurses should come on to the register, on the ground that, in common with others, they possessed the requisite general qualifications.

The opponents of State Registration for Trained Nurses are busy supplying reasons to various sections of the community for opposition to this necessary measure.

To *medical men* they suggest that the nurse, if she is registered, will develop into a pseudo-medical practitioner. The facts are that the well-trained nurse desires to excel in her own department, avoids meddling with the affairs of a profession for which she has no qualifications, and is the loyal and valuable assistant of the doctor. It is the woman with a smattering of nursing knowledge who presumes to treat his cases and to inculcate doubt as to his methods.

To *nurses* they suit the argument to the nurse concerned. Thus the nurses of the large training-schools are told that if Registration is enforced the

value of their certificates will be depreciated, and that nurses with the best and with inferior training will be placed on the same level of mediocrity.

Has this been the result of registration for the medical profession? Does the gold medal of the University of London carry no honour?

Poor Law infirmary nurses are told that they are not included in the scheme, which is absolutely untrue. The half-trained and cottage nurses are encouraged to consider themselves on a par with the women who hold a three years' certificate from a good school, and are urged to oppose Registration because they themselves would not be eligible without further experience.

It is suggested to nurses who received their training before the three years' standard of training was usual that, although vague promises are made to them, it by no means follows that they will be recognised as members of the nursing profession if Registration becomes law. This has no basis in fact, as both Bills now before Parliament advise a two years' term of grace, during which time full justice would be done to all existing workers.

It is urged upon *hospital committees and Poor Law guardians* that if any measure is passed giving nurses a definite status other than that of domestic servants, which they are now, they will be independent of these authorities; whereas the truth is, no nurse, until she had fulfilled her term of probation and was therefore at liberty to sever her connection with the institution concerned, would be eligible for registration.

The *public* are told that they will have to pay more for the services of nurses; moreover, that they will be too fine ladies to do the work required of them. Those of the public who do not understand wherein the real value of the trained nurse lies, have a considerable weakness for the uneducated nurse, because, while the one who realises her duty has no hesitation in explaining why such and such things cannot be done, the uneducated one drops a curtsy and says "Yes, m' lady, certainly."

A most able letter by Lady Helen Munro Ferguson, refuting the inaccuracies which occurred in a recent article in the anti-Registration organ on this subject, should do great good in enlightening the nurses in those institutions where the authorities are in opposition to the movement, by putting the true facts of the case before them.

We have only to point out that our contemporary has entirely withheld from the knowledge of its readers the fact of the support accorded to the Registration movement by the British Medical Association at its annual meeting at Oxford, when it voted in favour of the principle of registration, to demonstrate the partisan tactics pursued by that organ.

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