

THE  
**BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING**  
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED  
**THE NURSING RECORD**  
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 869.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1904.

Vol. XXXIII.

**Editorial.**

**THE EFFECT OF A REGISTRATION ACT.**

We find that there is still considerable anxiety on the part of nurses who do not hold a three years' certificate of training as to what their position will be if an Act of Parliament is passed prescribing this standard in future. Let us say once again, therefore, that no nurse possessing good credentials need have the least fear as to her position under any Registration Act. No Act of Parliament is retrospective, and we may remind nurses that when the Midwives' Act was passed in 1902, it provided for a two years' period of grace in which every woman could register, provided that at the passing of the Act she had been for at least one year in *bond-fide* practice as a midwife, and that she bore a good character.

Much misapprehension would be saved if nurses would procure and study the Registration Bills, which are obtainable through any bookseller, or from Eyre and Spottiswoode, East Harding Street, Fleet Street, E.C., price 2d., post free. Thus, in the Bill of the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses (Bill 59), under the heading "Provision for existing Nurses," they would find the following Clause:—

"Any person who, within two years from the commencement of this Act, claims to be certified thereunder shall be so certified, provided such person . . . (2) produces evidence of training satisfactory to the Council, and has been for at least three years in *bond-fide* practice as a nurse, and is of good character. At the expiration of the said term of two years any nurse claiming to be certified under this Act shall have completed a three years' term of training in hospital wards approved of by the Council."

But whether any Bill introduced made this provision or not, nurses may be quite certain that Parliament would safeguard existing interests. The stock argument, if argument it can be called, of the opponents to Registration is that

"you cannot register character." The answer to this is, that while an examination by a Central Board can only deal with the technical knowledge of the candidate, every candidate for examination will have to produce credentials from her training-school, and it is not to be supposed that the authorities of the training-schools will either keep in their schools for three years or recommend for examination persons of unsuitable character. Thus, indirectly, character will be registered. Further, provision is made in the Bill for the suspension or removal from the Register of any nurse whose conduct is proved to be disgraceful in a professional respect. At present, once certificated is always certificated.

It must always be remembered that while the opponents of Registration take shelter behind the question of "character," they have another objection of which so much is not heard.

With the passing of a Registration Act the minimum amount of knowledge required of a trained nurse would be defined, and every candidate for Registration would have to satisfy a central examining body that she possessed the requisite knowledge before being placed on the Register and guaranteed to the public as competent. It is to what is termed "State interference" with the present system, or want of system, of education that the anti-Registrationists really object. The public must understand that at present they have no guarantee in many instances of either the character or the qualifications of the nurses they employ, and that the private nursing world is overrun with women who cannot obtain employment in hospitals or other professional institutions.

The principle of the Registration of Trained Nurses by the State, as the International Council of Nurses declares, is now generally conceded as safeguarding the public health, and as promoting a more thorough education of nurses. It is the duty of the Training Schools to certify to the qualities of character and moral fitness of candidates for Registration.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)