

Progress of State Registration.

On Thursday, March 30th, on the motion of Sir A. Acland-Hood, the following Select Committee was appointed in the House of Commons to consider the expediency of providing for the Registration of Nurses:—Dr. Ambrose (Mayo, W.), Major K. Balfour (Christchurch), Mr. Douglas (N.W. Lanarkshire), Mr. C. Hobhouse (Bristol, E.), Dr. Hutchinson (Rye), Mr. Mount (Newbury), Lord Morpeth (Birmingham, S.), Mr. Pierpoint (Warrington), Mr. Tennant (Berwickshire), Sir J. Stirling-Maxwell (College Division of Glasgow), and Sir J. Batty Tuke (Edinburgh and St. Andrews Universities). The Committee met on Wednesday and elected Mr. Tennant as Chairman.

All those who have evidence of value to submit to the Committee should address the Secretary, Select Committee on Nursing, House of Commons, London, S.W., and request to be heard.

The Bill to regulate the qualifications of Trained Nurses, and to provide for their Registration, presented by Mr. Munro-Ferguson, is down for a second reading on April 17th, but it is very unlikely that it will be discussed on that date. But it is all to the good that the question of Nurses' Registration should be kept well before the House, although the best Parliamentary friends of the movement feel that until the Select Committee has taken all the evidence on the question it considers necessary, and has made its Report, it would not be in the best interests of nurses to press a debate.

MEETINGS IN SOMERSET.

A Social Meeting for Nurses and those interested in their work, now a well-established feature of the Somerset nursing world, was held at Kingston Grange, Taunton, on March 23rd. It is only necessary to add that the day was fine to be assured that a very pleasant afternoon was spent.

Two circumstances combined to give the day a more than ordinary interest, viz., the announcement that it was hoped to hold a *fête* for nurses from all parts of the country on May 30th at Moredon, by the very kind invitation of Mrs. Barrett; and an address on the State Registration of Nurses, given by Miss Amy Hughes, who was introduced in a few warm words of welcome by the Hon. Miss Stanley.

Miss Hughes spoke as an advocate of Registration, but she presented her arguments with so much force and moderation, and recognised with so much fairness the point of view of its opponents that her address was equally full of interest and information for the three classes who probably made up her audience—viz., those in favour, those against the scheme, and those who from various causes are still undecided which view to adopt.

Miss Hughes began by briefly outlining the present position of affairs. Two Bills, dealing with the subject had been introduced into Parliament last session, but had not proceeded beyond their early stages. A Select Committee of the House of Commons was appointed to inquire into the whole matter and

collect evidence, and, as the investigation was not complete, was to be reappointed this session. State Registration meant, briefly, the appointment of an independent council of medical men, nurses and the public, who should have power to test by examination the knowledge of those nurses who wished to be enrolled on the Register, and to call themselves Registered Nurses. This has already been done in the case of the midwives, but Miss Hughes pointed out that, whereas no woman not on the register will be allowed to practise as a midwife, it is not intended to penalise in any way the nurse who is not on the register. The nurse who trained only for district work, or for a short period, would still be able to practise her profession, but those who wished to qualify as fully-trained nurses would be obliged to have the minimum of knowledge required by the Board, and would also from time to time be obliged to send in reports of their work, &c., to the Board. At present any woman could call herself a nurse, and the public had a right to know that anyone who assumes such a tremendous responsibility, often of life and death, had properly trained herself for the work. Miss Hughes showed clearly how at present it was impossible to have any assurance that such was the case. A nurse receives a certificate after one, two, three or four years' training, but there is nothing to show its value. In England and Wales there were general hospitals, the number of beds in which ranged from ten to ninety-two, which gave from one to three years' certificates. Miss Hughes instanced one with sixteen beds and two cots that gave a two or three years' certificate. How could a nurse in such a school be properly taught her work? Yet the wording of the certificate given by this hospital was almost the same as that given by St. Bartholomew's. The training given in the large hospitals was not perfect; at present it was quite possible for a nurse to spend three or four years in one, and all that time never to have seen a case of enteric or diphtheria, yet she might be sent for her first private case to nurse one of these diseases. Miss Hughes said she herself had had to show a so-called fully-trained nurse how to syringe out the ears and wash out the eyes.

The scheme of nursing as laid down by Miss Nightingale was excellent, but the training-schools had not kept pace with the growth of nursing; they each had their own standard, and were a law unto themselves, and Miss Hughes gave several instances of the resulting anomalies when nurses had proved ignorant of some of the elementary details of their work. The patient suffered first, and then the doctor. Under a system of State Registration an independent examining body would find out what a nurse did know, and would place no one on the Register who had not herself done all things likely to be necessary, and, in so acting, would train the training-schools so that any nurse would be taught the nursing of all ordinary surgical operations, and would have experience in the course of her training in all ordinary diseases, such as typhoid, &c.

At present a certificate shows nothing of the real knowledge of its holder, and once given can never be taken away; and there is nothing to prevent a nurse, now imprisoned for theft, from resuming her profession when she is released. In no other profession would such a thing be possible; a doctor or solicitor would be struck off the rolls. Surely a central body was required to deal with such cases.

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