

"An efficient nursing service is a valuable national asset, and one which it is important should be appreciated at its true value as a factor in the well-being of the people."

The witness strongly dissented from the opinion expressed by a former witness, that a systematic knowledge of the principles of nursing would produce pseudo-scientific workers eager to assume the responsibilities of the medical faculty. Such a suggestion was exceedingly mischievous and not founded on fact. The relations of medical men and the most highly-trained nurses in our hospitals were of the most cordial character. It was usually the semi-trained and thoroughly untrustworthy woman who attempted to cloak her ignorance with pseudo-scientific pretensions.

Replying to a question by the Chairman as to the possible danger of a registered nurse considering herself the competitor of the doctor, the witness said she thought the contrary was proved by the relations existing between the medical staffs of hospitals and the highly-skilled Sisters and nurses who worked under their direction. The very greatest harmony prevailed. Where a nurse ventured to assume the duties of a medical practitioner, it would be found to be due, as a rule, to lack of training and discipline—from ignorance, in fact, rather than from too much learning.

In reply to the Chairman as to the fees which nurses can afford to pay for Registration and examination, Mrs. Fenwick was of opinion that they could and would pay £3 3s. for examination, and £2 2s. for Registration. In regard to the possible hall-marking of bad nurses, she could not imagine that women who, during their youth and a prolonged period of systematic training, had given evidence of possessing the necessary personal qualities, would be likely to deteriorate because they were placed on a Register. If any nurse did prove unworthy after due inquiry there would be no insuperable difficulty in removing her. It was a question of administrative detail.

In regard to the nursing of the poor, the witness was of opinion that the poor would be able to secure adequate nursing attendance if a Registration Act were passed. It was urged when the question of the Registration of medical men was before Parliament that the poor would not be able to obtain medical attendance. As a matter of fact, the poor had never been so well attended medically as at the present time.

The nurses of the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute, who nursed in the homes of the poor, were highly trained. Affiliated to the Institute were County Nursing Associations, whose members nursed in rural districts. That class, however, were nearly always certificated midwives, and as they could register under the Midwives' Act, no injustice would be done them. They did attend the sick as well, but were not trained nurses. She would strongly disapprove of the Registration of two classes. All registered nurses should attain the minimum standard defined by law; to multiply standards would be to create confusion in the public mind.

In reply to the question as to whether she had any knowledge of Nursing Homes, the witness said she had. She considered there was scope for scandal in connection with them, and she was in favour of Nursing Homes and institutions being inspected and registered under municipal authority; such registration would be for the public benefit, and the public must pay for it. It would be unjust that the nurses should do so, as they would have to do if the Registration of

Nursing Homes was included in the Registration Bill.

Mrs. Fenwick next handed in the reply prepared by the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses to the statement made by the Central Hospital Council for London, and drew attention to the fact that there was no nurse representative on that Council, so that it could not express the opinion of the thousands of nurses certificated by the institutions concerned. The reply expressed the views of 1,500 Matrons and nurses, many of whom held certificates from the twelve large London hospitals. She also handed in a list of about 1,800 persons (Medical Practitioners, Matrons, nurses, and members of the public) in favour of the principle of State Registration of Nurses. Also copies of Resolutions, passed by the General Medical Council, the British Medical Association, and various nursing and other bodies in support of the principle of State Registration of Nurses.

The witness then referred to the assertion made to the Committee that the number of bad nurses who form a public danger was not nearly so great as has been represented. She believed the exact opposite to be the case. (1) Comparatively few delinquents brought themselves within the arm of the law. (2) If a nurse in a hospital or institution proved unworthy the fact was kept as quiet as possible for the sake of the institution. (3) Numbers of the public who found a nurse unsatisfactory from motives of mistaken kindness frequently hushed the matter up.

Mrs. Fenwick then gave instances of a few of the cases which had come to her own personal knowledge as examples of women who had been convicted perpetually for the last fifteen or twenty years, and handed in a brief synopsis of nearly 100 cases in which women described as nurses, and in many cases acting as nurses, had appeared in the dock for criminal offences varying from murder to petty thefts. The only remedy for this public danger was, in her opinion, Registration, so that every one of these nurses should be known and controlled, and if once convicted of a crime, struck off the Register, so that they might no longer have the unique opportunities of exploiting the public which they can gain by obtaining admission to private houses in the guise of a trained nurse.

The witness then briefly described the main principles embodied in the Nurses' Registration Bill—viz., the establishment of a minimum standard, by a representative Council, largely directly elected by nurses themselves, and Registration after a thoroughly practical examination. Mrs. Fenwick thought there was no danger as had been suggested by one witness that such a Council might be composed of theorists; if the members were adequately paid, thoroughly well qualified medical practitioners, matrons and sisters would be willing to undertake the duties as they do on the Army Board.

In regard to fees, she considered that £5 5s. was a small sum to pay for the privileges secured, and all the nurses she had communicated with on the subject had expressed their willingness to pay this sum. As a proof that nurses can, if necessary, find even larger sums, she stated that every probationer who enters the Preliminary Training-School of the London Hospital for eight weeks' training is compelled to furnish the name of someone who will be responsible in a fine of £10 if the applicant of her own accord break her agreement or withdraws after leaving the Preliminary Training-School.

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