

Progress of State Registration.

At the recent annual meeting of the Royal British Nurses' Association the resignation of Miss Thorold, Lady Superintendent of the Middlesex Hospital as Vice-Chairman was reported, "on account of want of sympathy with the movement for the State Registration of Nurses."

This, in our opinion, is the most honourable course for the anti-registration members of the Association to take, and had they tendered their resignations ten years ago, instead of attempting to capture, for a reactionary policy, an Association founded to promote the Higher Education and State Registration of Nurses, their conduct would not have received the universal condemnation which it has done, and which it unquestionably deserved:

Miss Thorold joined the R.B.N.A. as soon as a Royal Princess had accepted the Presidency. She was Vice-Chairman of the Association in 1894, when the President stated in a paper prepared by her, with the consent of the Executive Committee, for presentation to the Congress of Hygiene and Demography at Buda Pest, that:—"It is the hope of the Corporation that the time is not far distant when the State will see the importance of recognising a definite Diploma of Nursing, and of giving its official sanction to the maintenance of the Register of Trained Nurses." Thus the views of the Association were declared if individual officers had no settled convictions.

The reactionary policy of the officials of the Middlesex Hospital has failed. The erring R.B.N.A. has decided once more to stand for the just organisation, for which we nurses founded it—as for ourselves, we can see nothing but hope for the future of the Association if it is purged of the treacherous clique which so long misgoverned it.

We have before us the autograph document prepared by us and read at the first meeting of the founders of the British Nurses' Association in 1887, from which we quote the concluding paragraphs in support of our contention that State Registration was one of the principal objects of the Association from its foundation.

"Before discussion is invited as to the desirability of forming such an Association I should like to touch upon one of the principal objects—that is, the Registration of Nurses. I mention this subject specially because I am deeply interested in it, and because it has already been taken up by an amateur association." . . . "In my opinion registration, to be of any value at all, must be undertaken by a legally recognised Body, largely composed of the heads of the Nursing Profession themselves, with the full concurrence of medical men."

That principle was accepted at our first meeting—upon it we stand, without it we fall.

The suggestions made by Sir Henry Burdett to the Select Committee on Nursing will no doubt be recognised by nurses as embodying the principles which underlay the scheme of the Society which the City Financiers petitioned the Board of Trade to incorporate, and which aroused such strenuous and effective opposition amongst nurses. He would, in short, give the authorities of training-schools the control of nurses throughout their professional life, giving them power to make or mar their careers, with the right to withdraw their certificates, without any obligation to keep them employed, with the exception of the offer of work on the private nursing staffs of the institution concerned. Imagine a qualified medical practitioner consenting to walk in the path laid down for him by the school where he obtained his medical education, dependent on the goodwill of the authorities of that school for his power to support himself and those dependent upon him! Such a suggestion would be met by a storm of indignation, and we venture to predict it will be met in the same way if any endeavour is made to impose it upon nurses.

Sir Henry Burdett is of opinion that "those who pay the piper should call the tune." We desire to point out, therefore, that the training of nurses has never been undertaken by the schools—although they have done much good work in this connection—primarily in the interests of nurses, but because the method of nursing by a well-organised school for nurses has been proved to be the most efficient and cheapest method of nursing the sick, an obligation which hospital committees have assumed. The person who will pay the piper under a Registration Act will be the nurse, and on this line of reasoning she should therefore call the tune.

No practical person could for one moment suggest that there should be 400 or 500 portals to the nursing profession, or that a Central Board should assume the responsibility for the efficiency of candidates whose proficiency it has not tested.

We must draw attention to one other point. Sir Henry Burdett asserts that it is proposed to make nurses pay £5 5s. for examination and registration, while doctors only pay £5. As a matter of fact, medical fees amount to about £30, as any medical man can testify.

No. 2 of *The Canadian Nurse* is much enlarged this quarter, and the excellent article by Miss Charlotte L. Eastwood, of the Victorian Order of Nurses, on the "Benefits of State Registration" is concluded with the following significant words:—"This thing, which we really believe to be essential to our standing as trained nurses, cannot be accomplished by the few. The legislators are not going to pay attention to the handful. As a sisterhood we must all strive together to gain this good."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)