

In regretting his inability to attend the meeting, *Mr. J. Smith Whitaker*, Medical Secretary of the British Medical Association, writes:

"As regards the British Medical Association, you already have the repeated assurance of its approval of the State Registration of Nurses, which approval, as you are aware, was expressed on the second occasion of the discussion of the subject by the Annual Representative Meeting by a majority of 90 to 3, all present voting on one side or the other."

*Miss E. S. Haldane, LL.D.*, Chairman of the Scottish Registration Committee, writes:

"Will you make my apologies and say how sorry I am not to be able to be present, and how much I hope nurses will really express their feelings in the matter in practical form. I find the idea is growing everywhere that Registration ought to come, and will come, but at the same time many hold back from giving the practical encouragement to the movement which they should give in order to bring it to immediate success."

*Mrs. Fawcett, LL.D.*, writes:

"The cause of Registration has my entire sympathy, and I hope your efforts to bring it about will ere long be crowned with success."

Amongst others who kindly send letters of regret are Lord Robert Cecil, M.P., Sir Alfred Keogh, Director-General of the Army Medical Service; Mrs. Edwin Gray, President, National Union of Women Workers; Miss Emily Janes, Organising Secretary, National Union of Women Workers; Mrs. Ramsay Macdonald, Women's Industrial Council; Miss Kathleen Burleigh, Hon. Secretary, Scottish Registration Committee, and a large number of other friends and well wishers.

#### THE CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS.

LADY HELEN MUNRO FERGUSON, in opening the meeting, said—The present year marks the twentieth year of effort in the cause of State Registration of Trained Nurses. Some may be tempted to think that, in spite of these efforts, and the work of the indomitable leaders of the movement, it is disappointing not to be further on the road of attainment. There is, however, no cause for discouragement. No reform worth having is easily won, and when we consider that this necessitates Parliamentary action on behalf of a profession of women, who have no means of influencing legislation, and that the measure in which we are interested is jostled by hundreds of others affecting whole classes of the community, we cannot wonder at the obstacles we have to encounter. But the cause has secured the support of the British Medical Association, of the Council of Matrons, of the Leagues of Self-Governing Nurses. Over 2,000 nurses are enrolled as active workers in its behalf. The Report of a Select Committee of the House of Commons was entirely favourable to State Registration, and no impartial person can read that Report without being impressed by the strength of the arguments advanced on behalf of Registration. Again, Registration of Nurses is an accomplished fact in many of the United States of America, in Germany, in South Africa, and New Zealand, and Canada and Australia are working for it. The Local Government Board for Scotland has been so

impressed by its desirability that it has devised a registration scheme of its own, and held its first examination this year.

There is, therefore, no need for discouragement, but there is every need to lose no opportunity of educating the public as to the need for registration.

Organisation is the order of the day. Even the Army cannot withstand it, and Agriculture is struggling to co-operate; the workers look towards co-operation before such questions as poor-law reform and old age pensions are dealt with. Every trade, every profession realises its necessity. Nurses also must organise if they desire to advance to disciplined unity, or pay the penalty of disorganisation and unregulated labour in low remuneration, loss of status, and unfair competition. They cannot organise without the recognition of a standard defining the meaning of the term Trained Nurse, and without its being made illegal for anyone not so qualified to call herself a Registered Nurse. The State hall mark is the more essential because nursing is not a commodity which can be readily verified as genuine. The service contains all grades from the friendly neighbour to the hospital nurse. It differs again from other trades and professions, inasmuch as information can usually be obtained as regards the worker engaged with due deliberation, and should this person prove inefficient she can be replaced at the price of a little inconvenience. But a nurse is required in an emergency. Her efficiency is tested at the expense of her employer's health, comfort, and even life. If she fails, there is often no possibility of going back. It is absurd and impracticable to say that the employer should write round to the various Matrons under whom she has worked. Then most skilled workers enter their calling by the definite road marked out by trade union conditions. For the nurse there are a hundred portals by which she may enter her profession, from the three or four years' course in a large general hospital to the three months' district training in midwifery given to a "cottage nurse," who, after serving the Committee which trained her for two years, is then free to take up private nursing, or any other branch of nursing work without ever having spent a day in a hospital. Nurses have even been known to graduate for their profession in domestic service.

Once in the profession, the standing of all these workers is equal. They take the same work, receive the same remuneration, and it is a pure lottery what the public obtains. The nurse differs from other skilled workers in that her employers are not experts. The patient is not a connoisseur in nurses. The medical man is, but he has not had training in nursing, and he judges by results, which is rather late in the day. The opponents of Registration all agree in limiting responsibility to the medical attendant. The most inexperienced of us know the routine of a medical visit, and the confidence placed in the nurse. At present no disciplinary body exists which can exercise control over the nursing profession. Once obtained, a nurse's certificate cannot be withdrawn or endorsed, even if she commits every kind of professional blunder and ethical crime.

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