

In the rush and hustle of life neither doctor nor patient can ever be sure that the nurses they engage have had adequate training, until they are able to get the registered nurse.

There are two chief objections to Registration.

(1) That gentleness, tact, and sympathy are the first essentials in a nurse, and you cannot have documentary evidence of these. They are not, however, incompatible with trained qualifications, and there is no doubt that training disciplines and develops natural qualities. Often the gentleness of a nurse is the result of skill acquired during her training, and her sympathy is the outcome of her professional interest. The personality of a nurse may be acceptable to one patient and not to another. Some like a nurse who is gentle and deferential, others one who is commanding and authoritative in manner. It is strangely illogical to say that because we cannot secure evidence of personal characteristics we will have none of professional efficiency.

(2) It is also said that a registered nurse may become rusty, or that her health may be impaired. We cannot eliminate human frailty in any profession. The eyesight of a sea captain may become defective, but, at least, we know that since he has obtained his certificate, he has done nothing to forfeit it.

That is all the certificate of a nurse can denote, and we must be careful not to claim more than this. All reformers, from Cobden downwards, have realised the importance of not claiming more for the reforms which they advocate than can afterwards be sustained. But if we limit the effect of Registration to the utmost, it would afford great advantages over the present conditions, when, even if an employer asks to see certificates, he has no means of judging of their value.

Nursing is essentially a woman's calling. It has a chance of standing on a sound economic footing, and it would be deplorable if the standard were dragged down for want of the protecting Register.

The national health is of great moment at the present time, and it is not too much to expect Parliament to take an interest in the professional status of the nurses who daily and hourly are fighting the battle of good health and sound national physique.

FIRST RESOLUTION.

The first resolution, proposed by Miss Mollett, was as follows:—

This meeting desires to urge upon the Government and upon Parliament the pressing necessity which exists for an Act for the Registration of Trained Nurses. It would further remind them:—

- (a) That a Select Committee of the House of Commons has unanimously recommended such legislation.
- (b) That the medical profession in this country, through the British Medical Association, has on three occasions passed resolutions expressing its approval of the State Registration of Trained Nurses.
- (c) That the self-governing Associations of Nurses unanimously desire it.

(d) That other countries and British Colonies have passed such Acts for the efficient education and control of Nurses, and for the safety and welfare of the sick.

Similar legislation is, in the opinion of this meeting, a matter of urgent and national importance.

Miss MOLLETT said: I speak on behalf of my profession, and I am deeply interested in safeguarding the interests of a large and hard-working body of women. This, I believe, our Bill will do, therefore I move the resolution with conviction.

Our training as nurses is hard, it occupies from three to four of the best years of our lives, the salaries to be gained at the end of that time are not princely, and a nurse is old at forty. We are continually being told that there is much danger in a woman undertaking the duties of a sick nurse without thorough training, and that careful education is needed. As a matter of fact, the merest smattering of nursing knowledge (or none at all) combined with some personal good qualities and a nursing uniform, are quite sufficient stock-in-trade for any woman who desires to call herself a trained nurse. To pose as a hospital nurse is a fraud which does not count.

Either, therefore, it is quite immaterial whether a woman is trained at all, or legislation is strangely at fault, for not providing some legal machinery by which a danger to the community can be restricted and a manifest economic injustice restrained. Trained Nurses have a right to expect that their status shall be protected.

I have never been able to see where the sympathy with the untrained nurse who poses as trained comes in. No reasonable person would feel any sympathy for a man who, through sheer laziness or incapacity, refused to go through the necessary curriculum, but still wanted, untrained and unqualified, to set up for a doctor. There is not even the question of expense. A woman who desires to nurse receives her training free, generally with a small salary added, in exchange for her services, and there is not the smallest doubt that if a proper training were compulsory, every suitable candidate could obtain it with little difficulty.

State Registration will provide a strong central authority that will control the education of nurses. It must have power to enforce discipline and good professional laws amongst us, so that we shall not only be well trained, competent, and serviceable, when we leave our training schools, but we shall remain so. Further, that authority shall have the power not only to punish but to protect us. And we greatly desire that that central authority shall be really and truly, and not merely in name, representative of the Nursing Profession. We are not visionaries, and we do not ask for the moon; we simply wish to consolidate our profession, and we ask for the power to expel our own black sheep.

We desire to be governed professionally by sane laws, by which we shall have bound ourselves of our own free will for our own and the common good.

DR. W. I. DE COURCY WHEELER, Member of the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland, in seconding the resolution, declared that the medical profession had plumped in favour

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