

woman, who states that she is a Trained Nurse, and applies to be registered as such, is, in very truth, able to tend the sick efficiently? That is a crucial and all-important question. For the present, we commend it to our readers' earnest consideration, and will gladly hear their views upon it.

THE following letter from H.R.H. Princess Christian appeared in the columns of the *Times* on the 11th inst. :—

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "TIMES."

SIR,—As president of the British Nurses' Association, a society which is designed "to unite all British Nurses for their mutual help and protection, and for the advancement in every way of their professional work," I am desirous to place before the public, through your columns, a short statement of some of the methods by which the objects of the Association will, we hope, be attained, of the advantages which will accrue from their attainment, and of the methods by which such attainment may be promoted by those who are not included within our body.

It is hardly necessary to say that the education of Trained Nurses in this country has been greatly due to the experience of the Crimean War, and to the noble efforts then made by Miss Nightingale to provide for the proper caré of the sick and wounded soldiers. At the present day Trained Nurses are said to amount to 15,000 in number; and, whether in hospitals or in private families, their aid in sickness is universally held to be indispensable. No surgeon or physician would willingly take charge of a serious case without the assistance of a Trained Nurse, and the medical profession as a body has borne the most prompt and generous testimony to the great value of skilled Nursing. There must have been countless instances, there must be countless English homes, in which the presence of a Trained Nurse, knowing what to do and to avoid, and capable of rendering intelligent obedience to medical directions, has turned the scale between life and death.

Nurses are trained in hospitals, and, in order that their training may be effectual, and may fit them for all the duties which they may be called upon to discharge, it must be of considerable duration, must embrace a considerable variety of experience, and must be guided by careful and systematic teaching. A Nurse must attend lectures, and must pass through medical, surgical, and special, wards before she can be fully capable of doing all which can be required of her. In other words, her professional education can only be completed at the cost of much time, industry, and expense. Student Nurses, or "Probationers," in many cases pay to be taught, and, even when they do not actually give money, they are required to work for a smaller remuneration

than they might easily obtain in other kinds of employment.

The natural goal of any distinctly professional education is the attainment of some title which may be accepted by the public as an evidence of competency; but in the case of Nurses, although the education has now been given for several years, the natural goal has still to be supplied. Many women who enter as Probationers are found to be physically or morally unfit for the duties of Nursing, and are dismissed from training by their superiors, while many others withdraw themselves after a brief period of instruction. Members of both these classes, although not only incompetent, but possibly otherwise unfit, are apt to seek employment in Nursing, and to describe themselves as "hospital Trained Nurses."

Against such unqualified persons it is in the power of hospitals to protect themselves, but it is hardly in the power of the public to do the same. Many private agencies for the supply of Nurses to families have come into existence, and the number of such agencies seems likely to increase. Although there can be no doubt that many of those which now exist are admirably conducted, and are of great public utility, there is, nevertheless, reason to fear that the managers of others do not always require sufficient security for the fitness of those whom they engage. A Nurse, when wanted, is generally wanted at once, and a private employer is seldom able to test her qualifications. He is almost compelled to trust to some agency or institution, and is, to this extent, liable to be deceived.

The British Nurses' Association, having succeeded, in the first place, in constituting itself by the enrolment as members of thoroughly trained and competent Nurses and no others, is now seeking to establish, it is hoped on the secure basis of a Royal Charter, a system of Registration which will enable every Trained Nurse to produce documentary evidence of her education and attainments, and thus to show that she is entitled to confidence in her calling. When such a system is brought into operation, people who employ unqualified Nurses will have only themselves to blame for any ill-consequences which may ensue.

Besides this, the primary object of the association, it has other objects also, which are, indeed, subsidiary to the first, but which will scarcely be less useful. It aims at affording increased facilities for the education of Nurses, and it will also seek to originate and to maintain, when necessary by the aid of the public, whatever institutions or helps may seem likely to be beneficial to Nurses generally and calculated to improve the quality of their work. It is hardly within the power of Nurses, by the small annual contributions which are all that they can afford, to bear the whole burden of supporting the association in order to carry out even its primary

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