

training or experience such may possess. Consequently it is certain that the law will never insist, to the exclusion of such, that all private nurses *must* be efficient and trained. But it is equally certain that the time is rapidly coming when the law will make it illegal for any woman to offer her services, for fee or reward, to the public, as a trained nurse, unless she can produce proof that she is entitled to the name. Therein lies the great distinction. The nursing that is done for love, for charity, for nothing in return, no one can cavil at, few would refuse; its worth essentially consists in the reason which prompts it. *But the nursing which is done for money, for any alien,* is a totally different thing, and is only worth its market value. Now, of course, the market value of untrained nursing is just nothing at all, but if any woman by falsely asserting she is "trained" demands and receives two or more guineas weekly, the current price of the article she imitates, she is simply obtaining money by false pretences—in other words, committing a felony, punishable by many Acts of Parliament. Public opinion is to our certain knowledge rapidly awakening to this fact, and will probably, sooner than later, express its views quite unmistakably upon the subject.

A private nurse, therefore, in relation to the subject we are discussing, is a *woman who offers her services to the promiscuous public, as a fully trained and experienced nurse by profession, in return for definite payment.* So we come to the question: Could registration prevent an untrained nurse foisting herself upon doctors and patients as trained and experienced, and fit to be entrusted with the lives of the sick and the future happiness of all to whom those lives are dear? We say most emphatically that it undoubtedly could and would do so, and proceed to prove it.

Registration, as we have before pointed out, means the placing upon a Roll authorised by the State, the names of only those women whom a competent Board, appointed for the purpose, consider to have received sufficient training and to possess sufficient experience to deserve the title of trained nurses. This roll, added to, amended, and altered, must be by law published afresh from year to year, and placed on public sale at a small cost. Anyone, therefore, were registration in force, would have the means of seeing at a glance whether any given nurse were really trained or not, by finding out whether her name appeared on the State register or not. If not, and if a single shilling had been paid to her because of her assumption of the title, she could at once, and probably in some cases would, be prosecuted for felony. With such easy detection in front of them, and such inevitable oakum picking behind it, it would become too hazardous a proceeding for anyone, however unscrupulous, to pretend to be a trained nurse. And it would be absolutely

impossible to calculate the immediate results, not only to the public and to medical men, but to nurses themselves, which would follow such a clearance from their ranks of the scores of ignorant, careless, intemperate, dishonest, and dishonourable women who now usurp the title of trained nurse with fearless impunity, and who, while reaping no small advantage to themselves from their calling, are not only taking the bread out of the mouths of trained nurses, but are also sowing broadcast, trouble, pain, and sorrow, and bringing daily into deepest discredit its real members and the noble profession of Nursing itself.

We have proved therefore that registration would give the public, otherwise quite unable to judge, the power of discriminating the false from the true; that it would purge the grand calling of a nurse at once and for ever from those charlatans who now disgrace it and disparage its mission; that it would therefore save the sick much suffering from incompetent attendance, and the medical profession much trouble and anxiety upon the same score.

We trust, therefore, that we have proved our point beyond dispute—that registration must necessarily be for the good of all. But even suppose it did no good, it could not possibly work any harm. One would think that every good man and woman who knew how daily and hourly the sick in our land are suffering more than they need because of the ignorance and incompetence of those they have engaged as "trained nurses," would strain every nerve to find some means of prevention of the evil; and if a remedy were offered, one expects they would give it their advocacy and their help with all their strength and all their energies. Yet some who realise the facts, first hesitate as to whether any remedy should be applied, and then refuse a helping hand to those who would try one which may effect a cure, and certainly can do no harm. And their individual lack of help is perchance making other weak-kneed brothers or sisters also stand aloof, and in their turn their attitude is probably the cause of yet others keeping back. So doubts and delays play the game of the selfish and the interested in preventing or deferring reform. We have done our best; and now turning to those we have been specially addressing, we would say to them in all solemnity, "If registration would remove, or even lessen by one jot or tittle, the crying evils of the present system, why in the name of all that is sacred should it be delayed another day or another hour? Fellow-creatures are suffering—aye, and dying—from lack of efficient help, while you hold back, and argue, and wonder if the time has come to do anything to help them. If your inaction and languid doubts delay the remedy but one day longer than is necessary, just reflect for one moment upon the knowledge you must hereafter gain, of the suffering and the sadness that day's delay involved to sick and pained humanity."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)