

nursing becomes a recognised profession, no one can doubt that larger numbers of educated gentlewomen will adopt it as their life work than even do so now. Consequently the number of candidates for vacant probationerships at all well-known training schools for nurses will be greatly increased. From which it necessarily follows that the influence and position of the heads and managers of those schools will be in equal measure heightened. We ourselves would almost prophesy, that within ten years of registration becoming law, nurses, like medical students now, will have to pay for their training. But, putting this probability on one side, let us continue our argument.

The probationer has been to her great joy successful against a crowd of competitors, and entered her hospital. Knowing the difficulty she had in obtaining election, realising keenly how many would be glad instantly to fill her place were it to become vacant, can it for one moment be believed that she would not be as obedient to orders and as much under authority as probationers are now, and always have been, in every well-regulated hospital in the United Kingdom? But again we ask—how will the authority of the matron or the lay managers be lessened by registration over *any nurse* during her period of training? Will not that authority be greatly increased? Once more we maintain that it must be; and in that reason, as we said at first, we find our own sole objection to registration becoming the law of the land.

Let us explain our meaning in some detail. We take it that there can be no doubt that every candidate for registration will be required to produce to the registering body certain certificates; for example, one of moral character, and another of conduct and behaviour while being trained, as well as the essential proofs of knowledge and experience in nursing. The second of these would necessarily have to be given by the authorities of the hospital at which she had worked; and it is quite certain that no nurse would be placed upon the register of whose character and behaviour her superior officers testified in doubtful terms. So that it is palpable that if registration were the goal—and being a prime necessity of success in their profession, it would almost become the *compulsory goal of every nurse*—matrons and hospital managers would possess a tremendous power over nurses during their pupilage, which they have not at present, because then, by dismissing her before her training was ended, or even by refusing to grant the necessary certificate when it was completed, they would at once prevent any nurse from becoming registered. Whereas now, as every one knows, a nurse discharged from one hospital to-day may gain admittance to another next week, and cares not in the least if her certificate is refused, because she knows that many most excellent schools—St. Thomas's, for example, among

others—give no certificates at all to their best trained and most experienced pupils.

Now, as we before said, we recognised this at once, and we felt that in registration giving this enormous power to matrons and lay managers over the nurses they were training, there was a great and serious objection to the scheme. But, on careful consideration and consultation with legal, medical, and nursing friends, we believe there would be no danger in their obtaining this enhanced authority; for the heads of medical schools have always had this great power over their students, with benefit to all and harm to none; and the high reputation and honourable feeling actuating nursing authorities would almost certainly prevent the least attempt at unfairness or harsh treatment on their part of any individual nurse. And, besides all this, public opinion now-a-days is so sensitive and so easily aroused by even the appearance of injustice, that were such to happen and become known in one instance, we believe that it would raise such a storm of indignation that it would never take place again. But, though we would believe injustice would rarely or never occur, there cannot be the shadow of a doubt that registration would give to matrons and the lay managers of nurse training schools a greatly increased power over their pupil nurses.

Finally, we come to the question as it affects nurses who *have been registered*. We are informed on good authority that no one will be registered till she has had three full years of nursing work and experience. Now, how will the control of matrons or lay managers be lessened over any woman, whether sister or staff nurse, who has entered or continued in their service merely because she is registered? Because her efficiency and knowledge is guaranteed by law? The idea is ridiculous. She is now a free agent; she can leave her employment by notice given on either side at any time. While acting as their subordinate she must obey their orders or run the risk of being discharged, and thereby at once of losing the high character which she has gained. Indeed, the fact of her being a registered trained nurse would of itself impel her to maintain intact the high position and honourable title she had won for herself; and, in so far, the moral control of her matron and hospital managers over her would once more be *much greater than than it is now*. We have therefore, we consider, proved up to the hilt our contention that registration will probably increase, and certainly cannot diminish by one iota, the rightful and necessary influence, authority, and control over the nurses of the future by matrons and the lay managers of hospitals. And having done this we would venture once more to express the fervent hope that those who are opposing the scheme on this ground will now reconsider their position and give it for the future their equally firm and most valuable assistance and support.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)