

The objects claimed for such Registration are:—

- (a) The benefit to the public, who would, it is said, be enabled to ascertain from the Register the competency of the nurse employed, and would be protected from unskilled and incompetent persons.
- (b) The benefit to the "trained nurses" themselves, who are alleged to be placed at a disadvantage by the employment of imperfectly-trained persons.

We believe that these claims are mistaken, and that any system of State Registration would be detrimental to the public and harmful to the nurses themselves, for the following reasons:—

1. Inasmuch as any system of Registration must be based on the results of testing by examination the technical capabilities of a nurse, it of necessity raises to a predominant position this side of her work, and leaves entirely unconsidered those personal qualities upon which her main value depends, such as good temper, manner, tact, discretion, patience, and unselfish womanliness. It is these characteristics which cannot be ascertained by examination, and which no system of Registration can include.

The experience of those concerned in the training of nurses and supplying them to the public shows that it is the want of these qualities in a nurse which gives rise to complaints on the part of patients and their friends. It is seldom that a want of adequate technical training is the ground of fault-finding.

Moreover, it is the difference in the comparative value of the technical skill and the personal qualities in the making of a nurse which constitutes the essential difference between her and a doctor as regards the applicability of a system of Registration, and renders the analogy, so often made, entirely fallacious. A doctor's technical knowledge takes many years to acquire, and his education is tested at various stages by authorised bodies, and, however important his personal character may be, it is for his skill and knowledge primarily that he is consulted. But, without desiring to underrate the importance of the technical knowledge of the nurse, it is certain that—apart from a speciality, such as midwifery—the extent of this knowledge is secondary in importance to her personal character.

It is well known to many of the signatories that not a few women who have done extremely well in examinations have quite failed to make good nurses, or such as could with confidence be sent into private families.

No one would engage a governess, or even a domestic servant, simply because her name is on a register, without inquiring into her character as distinct from her ability to perform her specific duties. *A fortiori*, the same inquiry should be made before engaging a nurse. No Register would in either case furnish the requisite information.

2. A State Register of Nurses, far from being a security to the public, would be an actual source of danger, since an utterly unsuitable woman, simply because she has passed an examination, would be entitled to be on the Register, which it is claimed would certify to the nurse's fitness.

3. Great difficulty, personal odium, and possibly the expense of defending an action for libel, would attend anyone seeking to have a nurse's name removed from the Register, even if she were notoriously bad. Shortcomings sufficient to disqualify her as a nurse would be almost sure to be passed over, and a really bad nurse might, and many would, be going about "hall-marked" as fit to be employed. The public would be lulled into a false sense of security, being led to believe that the Register would protect them from incompetent and undesirable nurses.

4. In our opinion it is not advisable that there should be a uniform training made compulsory on all nurses, such as a State Registration would require. To supply the manifold needs of patients and to meet the very different conditions under which nursing of all sorts and kinds has to be done, a

variety of nursing knowledge and experience is requisite and a large number of women, trained only in certain directions, and who would not comply with the conditions imposed by Registration, satisfactorily supply what is wanted. To exclude such from following their occupation, as a State Register more or less aims at, would be as unjust as it would be impracticable.

5. If nurses are to be registered on their technical qualifications (and it is conceded even by the advocates of Registration that nothing else can be "registered"), it is inevitable that they will concentrate their efforts on the attainment of the technical knowledge, which is thus made the *first* essential. From the beginning of their training they will deem the passing of examinations to be of primary importance. Those who realise that the ultimate success of a nurse must depend upon her personal suitability for her work, already deprecate the growing tendency to attach undue importance to the passing of examinations at the expense of the cultivation of those qualities of power of observation, of sympathy, cheerfulness, and self-control without which the services of a technically-trained nurse can never be acceptable to a patient.

6. A State Register such as is proposed would tend to lower the status of the best nurses, partly from their association thereon with those persons who, from defects of character or performance, ought to be removed from the Register, but have not been so for the reasons stated. Further, if by the imposition of an unduly high standard of examination the best nurses (i.e. those able to pass such examination) may be said to be protected, this would be attained by the exclusion from the nurse's calling of a large number of women who could perfectly well fill many situations for which their services were suitable. If, on the other hand, an unduly low standard be set, the women most competent at examinations would be placed on the same level as the less capable, and those best qualified would lose most.

When in 1893 a scheme for the Registration of nurses was promoted, a similar protest to this was issued, signed by Miss Florence Nightingale and representatives of almost all the large London nurse-training schools, as well as most of those in the provinces, and we know that today Miss Nightingale's opinion remains the same as it then was, that as the personal qualities, which are of first importance in a nurse, cannot be registered, it would be misleading to allow nurses or the public to imagine that any scheme of State Registration would indicate the fitness of any woman registered to act as a desirable attendant on the sick.

It should not be forgotten that all important hospitals give to the nurses trained in their wards, and whose work has been well done, certificates of service after the ordinary term of three or four years has elapsed. These certificates are sufficient testimony of technical knowledge and experience, and would not be improved upon by a Registration or Examination by persons who had no experience of the actual conduct of the nurse during her period of service.

The list of signatures to the Anti-Registration Manifesto included the following names:—

*Chairmen of Hospitals and Others.*—Mr. Sydney Holland, Chairman of the London, Poplar and Tilbury Hospitals; Mr. Charles Burt, Chairman of the Royal Free Hospital; Lord Sandhurst, Chairman of the Weekly Board, Middlesex Hospital; Lord Methuen, Chairman of King's College Hospital; Mr. Henry Lucas, Chairman of University College Hospital; Mr. J. Danvers Power, Chairman of the National Hospital for the Paralysed and Epileptic; Mr. Arthur Lucas, Chairman of the Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street; Mr. J. G. Wainwright, Treasurer of St. Thomas's Hospital; Mr. H. Bonham-Carter, Secretary to the Committee of the Nightingale Fund; Mr. J. G. Talbot, M.P., Chairman of Westminster Training School; Colonel R. W. Sparks, Chairman Royal Hospital, Richmond; Mr. W. L. Saunders,

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