

## The Story of Nursing.

(Continued from page 20).

Having in three previous issues repeated some of the history concerning the fight of the Society for the State Registration of Nurses, lead by the late Ethel Gordon Fenwick, we go on a step further from 1904.

### Mr. Sydney Holland and the State Registration of Nurses.

IN A LETTER addressed to the *British Medical Journal*, Mr. Sydney Holland discusses the reply of the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses to the Anti-Registration Manifesto.

1. He alleges that the Matrons of almost all the leading training-schools are opposed to Registration, and would not serve on a General Nursing Council if appointed.

If these ladies are so oblivious of their public duty, then, they must stand aside; but our experience of human nature in the past leads us to believe that, having done their best to hinder reform until it is accomplished, they will be quite ready to accept any honours which may be offered them when the fight is over.

Nor can we accept as conclusive proof of the undesirability of Registration the fact that the names of eight of the Matrons of the 12 London hospitals with medical schools attached are appended to the Anti-Registration Manifesto of the Central Hospital Council. Consider for a moment the irresponsible conduct of four of these ladies in reference to the Registration question.

The Matron of the Middlesex Hospital has since 1888 been a member, and for many years an active Vice-chairman, of the Royal British Nurses' Association, founded for the purpose of obtaining Registration, and which has now a Bill before Parliament with this object.

The Matron of St. George's Hospital, although it cannot be laid to her charge that she has helped forward organisation, has also since 1890 been a member of the Royal British Nurses' Association and, therefore, presumably, a supporter of the principle of Registration until the Committee of St. George's Hospital took part in the Anti-Registration campaign.

The Matron of St. Mary's Hospital has been a member since 1888 of the Royal British Nurses' Association, and was one of the signatories to the petition for a Royal Charter, and her name was also appended to the petition *against* it; unsolicited, she applied for membership of the Society for State Registration of Trained Nurses, and has constantly expressed her support of the principle, and only withdrew from membership when the temptation to sign yet another document was apparently irresistible.

The Matron of University College Hospital has also placed herself in the same untenable position, having been, until the last few weeks, a member of the Matrons' Council, founded to obtain State Registration.

The fact that these four ladies hold responsible positions in the nursing world does not exempt them from a due sense of professional responsibility, and if Mr. Holland imagines that women who apparently cannot form a consistent opinion on so important a question as State Registration of Nurses inspire respect in virtue of their position rather than by their qualities, we can assure him that he has made a vast mistake.

2. A nurse's certificate, says Mr. Holland, shows that she has passed through a recognised training-school just as well as the Register could do.

But what about the training-schools which are not recognised, but which continue to flood the country with women whose certificates in the eyes of the public rank as of equal value with those of the best schools?

3. Nurses who in past years have gained their certificates have seriously deteriorated, but a nurse once on the Register will always be on unless guilty of some gross misconduct.

What about these same certificates? The nurses who

gained them still possess them, and can produce them at will as evidence of their capacity. How does Mr. Holland propose that those who are guilty of "gross misconduct" shall be dealt with except by a legally-constituted Central Board? Once a nurse is certificated and works independently there is no professional standard to which she must conform, no common rules of discipline to which she must submit. The statement that "it is by technical skill alone that a nurse is rendered valuable in cases of serious illness" is regarded by Mr. Holland as "a fallacy." Let us consider for a moment what would be the value to the public of a woman possessed only of charming "manner," tact, and amiability in cases of sudden serious haemorrhage, heart failure, or accident. It will readily be seen that technical skill is absolutely indispensable.

"It is silly to write with a sneer," says Mr. Holland, that "the opposition comes from certain hospital committees, the employers of nurses, and from some Matrons. Who are for it?" We will tell him at once. The intelligent minority of well-educated and efficient nurses throughout the country, particularly those engaged in private work. It appears to them reasonable that some distinction should be made between those nurses who have honourably qualified themselves for the serious work of their profession and those women who have not done so.

Mr. Holland harps upon the eminence of the anti-Registration signatories. We do not wish to dispute their potency, but we own ourselves amazed to find any intelligent persons appending their names to so illogical and unconvincing a document as their Manifesto.

If the House of Commons is to be persuaded to reject the Nurses' Bill those opposed to Registration will be required to advance stronger arguments.

The *American Journal of Nursing* says:—

It is surprising to read that the Central Hospital Council, composed of representatives from the managing boards of the London hospitals, are uncompromisingly opposed to Registration, and have formulated a resolution to that effect, and have also declared their determination to fight it in Parliament. When we recall the practical and most effective support given to the American nurses' movement by hospital governors and managers we are really unable to understand the attitude of the London council, except by a deduction very unflattering to themselves. Why should they not be as liberal and progressive as the American hospital boards?

Why indeed?

### The Deputation to the Public Health Committee.

It will be remembered that a Deputation from the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses was received in 1904 by the Public Health Committee of the House of Commons, when the reasons for Registration were advanced from various standpoints. We print below the Memorandum presented by Mrs. Mackenzie Davidson.

PRESENTED BY MRS. MACKENZIE DAVIDSON.

Gentlemen,—This question of the organisation of nursing by State Registration of Trained Nurses has from time to time within recent years been brought to the notice of the National Union of Women Workers of Great Britain and Ireland, which is the largest society of women of all classes in the United Kingdom, and of which I beg to hand you the last Annual Report.

At the Executive Committee of my Society, held on the 17th inst., the following resolution was unanimously adopted in relation to the Nursing Question:—

"That the Executive (of the National Union of Women Workers of Great Britain and Ireland) are prepared to support any action taken in asking for the appointment of a Select Committee."

In presenting the resolution to your notice, I would urge that the efficient nursing of the sick is a matter of vital importance to every member of the community. . . .

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