

fessional knowledge or experience, and without such qualifications he is manifestly unable to form a correct judgment of the acquirements, of the efficiency, of the character, or of the special qualifications necessary for a woman who can be safely certified to the public as a trained Nurse. It is stated in the circular issued by Mr. Burdett that the proposed Directory "would afford to the public some measure of protection against those women who, with little or no training worthy of the name, advertise themselves as competent attendants upon the sick." The Directory, in short, proposes to advertise to the public as competent attendants upon the sick, those women who appear to the compilers of the proposed list to fall into that category—a measure of protection which resembles the benefit which proverbially accrues to the blind who are led by the blind.

As we have already shown, Mr. Henry C. Burdett was concerned in a previous attempt on the part of lay authorities to issue an apparently authoritative list of trained Nurses. The mistake he and his colleagues made on that occasion—the cardinal error of undervaluing the necessity of a high standard of technical training for Nurses—is precisely the error into which he has again fallen.

For this matter is not as narrow as its promoter appears to consider it to be. It is the sick public, and the best members of the Nursing profession whose interests are keenly involved in the proposed scheme. It is essential for the public safety that the state of confusion and misapprehension as to the qualities of a trained Nurse which existed until very recent times, and which has not altogether yet been removed, should not be again resuscitated. It would be most dangerous to the sick that any woman, however ignorant or inefficient, however destitute of knowledge or of character she may be, should still be able to term herself a trained Nurse, and in support of her assumption of that title should be able to point to her name in a book bearing a so-called "official" title. Mr. Burdett has not the slightest experience of the difficulties of the work which he is projecting with a light heart. He can have no knowledge that there are a very large number of dangerous characters at present acting as trained Nurses with forged and spurious certificates and testimonials; and that it has taken five years of active work on the part of a powerful professional organisation to diminish, even to a small extent, their possibilities of evil. Such women will almost certainly attempt to secure enrolment of their names on a list supervised and selected by unprofessional persons, and if they succeeded the list would become a dangerous pitfall for the unwary public.

It would be of extreme detriment to the Nursing profession in its present unorganised condition, if any woman who has not undergone the generally accepted period of training could have her name placed upon an "Official Directory" of Trained Nurses; because it is quite certain that few Nurses would trouble to pass through an arduous three years' training if they could obtain an official guarantee of their efficiency after a shorter period. The Hospitals that enforce such a training would then speedily find a difficulty in filling their probationary vacancies, while those that kept to the now old-fashioned, one year, or two years' standard would be flooded with applicants to a corresponding extent. With diminished education it is manifest that there would come diminished efficiency, and the lowering of the standard of Nursing knowledge would not only be detrimental to the sick, but would also inevitably lead to the services of trained Nurses being less valued than they are at the present time. The Nurses now who get good fees because the standard of their profession has been so greatly raised, would with the lowering of that standard certainly receive a much lower remuneration, so that they would suffer in pocket as well as in reputation. Then there can be no doubt that a lower grade of workers would enter the profession, and the standard of Nursing and the usefulness of Nurses would both be thrown back into the condition in which they existed only twenty years ago; from which they have been rescued, and from which they have been raised, by the efforts of those who have insisted upon the necessity of Nurses receiving a three years' technical training.

It is therefore easy to understand the indignation which those who have carried on the important work of the Registration of Nurses must feel at this attempt on the part of an unprofessional person to lower the standard of Nursing knowledge and efficiency, which they have so carefully raised. This however is a matter which, as we have shown, even more closely affects the safety of the public than it threatens the efficiency, the status, the reputation and the remuneration of the Nursing profession, and we cordially sympathise with those who are now, we understand, taking steps to protest against this attempt on the part of Mr. H. C. Burdett to interfere with professional matters with which he can have no possible concern. Enormous interests are involved in this matter, and against these is not one valid argument to be advanced in favour of the publication of an unprofessional, unofficial, list of Nurses.

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