

The text from which our contemporary was speaking, was the Resolution recently passed by the Asylums Board, "that it be an instruction to the Committees of Management of the Imbecile Asylums to appoint a trained Hospital Nurse, with the title of Assistant Matron, who shall control and superintend the nursing of both male and female Infirmaries, and do the skilled nursing herself when required." But it is very noticeable, as our contemporary points out, that the Asylums Board has not ventured to carry to its logical conclusion the principle thus wisely enunciated. Because the Board has declined to give preference to women who have had Hospital training, in making future appointments of attendants in these Infirmaries. This result will, however, inevitably follow from the introduction of a trained Hospital Nurse as Assistant Matron into the Lunatic Asylums. It is not generally known, perhaps, that, in the large Asylums for the insane, special wards are, or even a special building is, set aside for the care and isolation of those who are sick in body as well as in mind; but this is, on its face, condemnatory of the better-known fact, to which we referred last week, that sick lunatics are not provided, in the great majority of instances, with attendants who have been trained in general Hospitals. The Resolution of the Asylums' Board, which we have quoted, not only emphasizes the remarks which we have made upon this subject during the last fortnight, but is also a very severe criticism upon the system which recognized that special buildings even were required for the sick insane, but neglected to provide adequate skilled and personal care for the patients transferred to those buildings. It will be generally felt that the moment when the governing body of the Metropolitan Asylums had realized the necessity of skilled Nursing for sick lunatics, was a most inopportune time for a retrograde attempt to be made to give untrained lunatic attendants an undeserved and most misleading recognition by placing their names upon the Register of Trained Nurses.

The opinions of the medical profession, as voiced by the *British Medical Journal*, are at one with the views of the Nursing profession, as expressed in these columns, on this matter; namely, that the sick who are insane deserve, and should receive, as skilled attendance in illness as though they were of sound mind; and, furthermore, that it is not

only irrational, but must be productive of injury rather than good, to bestow an official certificate of efficiency in Nursing upon persons who are necessarily inefficient, because entirely untrained. Surely the object to be aimed at is rather to bring about improvements in the training and knowledge of those to whom the care of the sick imbecile is entrusted.

We, at any rate, would confidently contend that the latter is the first step to be taken; and we are glad to agree with our contemporary in its belief that now the necessity for a better training amongst Asylum Nurses is becoming recognised, it is only a question of time when that improved training will be given. This furnishes, therefore, a further argument against the attempt made by Dr. Outterson Wood and others, to admit to the benefits and prestige of Registration of Trained Nurses, persons who are only untrained attendants upon the insane. If University Degrees could be obtained without knowledge, without expense, and without labour, they would become of no value or importance. What everybody can gain is valued by nobody. So the inevitable result, if attendants upon the insane could, without training, become officially registered as Trained Nurses, would be that the efforts to bring about improvements in the training of Mental Nurses would be stultified; for the best could only attain to the same level of Registration thrown open to the worst. If Lunatic Attendants could be recognised by the Chartered Association as Trained Nurses without having the trouble of learning, there would be no inducement to them to enter a General Hospital for training, or to make themselves proficient in any degree.

We have shown that the proposal accepted by the General Council would be fraught with injury to Trained Nurses, and would be misleading to the public. What we, and the *British Medical Journal*, have said, now proves that the scheme would be most injurious to the progress of improvements in the Nursing of the sick insane. Our information leads us to advise the Executive Committee of the Royal British Nurses' Association to immediately shelve their proposed scheme, and to give public notice of that fact. Otherwise they may find the public and the Nursing profession taking measures to protect themselves against the injuries which, as we have proved, this most ill-considered scheme is almost certain to cause,

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)