

know we are expressing the opinion of every educated woman in the nursing profession when we repeat, that those who advocate such a lack of system in training, have not yet grasped the most elementary principles of a nurse's education.

THE following letter from Miss Sophia Wingfield ably corroborates our views:—

DEAR MADAM,—As I have taken a somewhat active part in the matter now under discussion by the members of the Royal British Nurses' Association, namely, whether or no male and female persons who have not been trained in general hospital wards shall be admitted as members, and enrolled on the Register of Trained Nurses, I would crave your courtesy to refute the erroneous impression, which members may gather from a letter addressed by Dr. Outterson Wood to a contemporary, and to which publication I have addressed a reply. Firstly, Dr. Wood writes:—"I claim that all qualified nurses, medical or mental, surgical or obstetric, or fever, or any other class, have 'a right of entry' to the published register of the Royal British Nurses' Association." Here is the case, as you say, "in a nut-shell." Dr. Wood contends that men and women who have gained experience in the nursing of one branch of disease only, are "qualified" nurses. Now I, and those who agree with me, contend that no nurse is "qualified" who has not received experience in the nursing of general diseases *first*, and in the nursing of specialties, such as mental, obstetric, fever, or any other class *second*. What Dr. Wood proposes is to degrade our Register of Trained Nurses into a Directory of persons who have worked in special hospitals for the sick, and asylums for the insane, so that, instead of our Register being a guarantee to the public that each nurse enrolled is thoroughly trained, it will merely be a list of persons who have some knowledge of the nursing of special diseases. Again, Dr. Wood is well aware that he is making a mis-statement when he writes: "I am confident it is not the hospital nurses themselves who resist the claims of mental nurses. It is the narrow-minded policy of a few who would 'restrict the aims and scope of the Royal British Nurses' Association.'" Dr. Wood was present at the General Council Meeting on January 8th, 1897, when Dr. Fardon, the honorary medical secretary, announced that *eighteen* letters had been addressed to the members of the General Council by nurse members opposing the admission of specialists, and that only *one* letter had been addressed to that body supporting Dr. Wood's scheme. Moreover he is well aware, as it has been made public, that in answer to *three hundred* letters addressed by me to my nurse colleagues concerning this question, *two hundred and fifteen* answered protesting against this scheme, and *six* only giving a tentative consent. These replies from nurses, the large majority of whom I do not know personally, and some of whose letters you have kindly printed in the NURSING RECORD, are overwhelming evidence that the unbiassed "nurses themselves" are firmly opposed to the depreciation of their Register, and there is very little doubt that if this most deplorable measure is thrust upon us, that the best class nurses will remove their names from the Register of the Royal British Nurses' Association. Dr. Outterson Wood, and many of those who are supporting him, know very little

about the true "aims and scope" of the Royal British Nurses' Association, merely having joined it when all the arduous labour of working for the Royal Charter and the principle which it embodies, was over.

I am, dear madam,

Yours faithfully,

SOPHIA G. WINGFIELD,

Member of the General Council. R.B.N.A.

#### STATE REGISTRATION FOR NURSES.

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick points out in the *Nineteenth Century*, in her reply to Lady Priestley's criticism of the trained nurse, that the evils of which this lady complains arise from women who have little or no training, assuming the title, and attempting to perform the responsible duties, of the trained nurse in private houses. She concludes her article with the following recommendations:—

"It is even more serious that the facts which have appealed so strongly to Lady Priestley's mind are as nothing to the actual danger which untrained nurses are causing every day to the sick and the suffering. But it may very naturally be asked, what are those who are acquainted with the facts doing? If they know of the facts, how are they seeking to remedy them? And the answer is simple. Nine years ago public attention was called to this matter, and the Royal British Nurses' Association was formed to cope with the evil. We proposed that a Register of Trained Nurses should be forthwith published—an alphabetical list of names and addresses of women who had satisfied a Board of medical men and nurses that they had passed through a three years' training in hospitals, and that they were possessed of professional knowledge and unimpeachable personal character. We proposed that the name of any nurse who proved unworthy of trust should be removed from that register, and that the volume should be published annually, so that the public should be able to distinguish those who were, from those who were not, properly trained and trustworthy nurses.

The proposal was simple enough in all conscience, but it met with the keenest and most bitter opposition from institutions which sent out nurses to the public, and even from leading hospitals which were engaged in the same commercial occupation; but the Register was started as a voluntary measure, and within three years the Privy Council, after an exhaustive inquiry, recognised the public value of the movement and recommended her Majesty to grant the association a Royal Charter. To a large extent the work has been successful and there are many medical men at the present day who will only employ registered nurses. There are unhappily others who do not yet recognise the importance of having their

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)