

A Plea for Registration.

THE Editor of *Vectis*—a weekly journal published in the Isle of Wight—makes some powerful remarks on the subject of the legal Registration of nurses. The article in question puts the case for Registration so admirably that we quote largely from it.

"The modern Nurse is only the product of rather more than one generation—counting four generations to a century. Before the Crimean War her previous edition might be and often was a terrible person, but the growing mercy of the Queen's reign—with, of course, the Nasmyth hammer of material progress behind it—has made the profession of the Nurse a generally useful calling, where honourably pursued. There are of course Nurses *and* Nurses as there are two or more classes of most persons and things—there are Nurses who could be nothing else, could have been meant for nothing else, and there are others in whom the rough edges are for ever fraying out and who might have done 'anything fairly' as they nurse fairly. The education of Nurses is to-day as systematic as the teaching of Medical Students—it is not, even yet, as systematic perhaps as it might be, nor, in all cases, as prolonged as it should be, but, on the whole, a very small percentage only 'merely profess.' It is true that with the multiplication of Nursing Homes, Surgical Homes, Central Nursing Establishments for the Supply of Nurses—the demand and supply for ever shifting and variable, it is true, I say, that the risk of incompetent people being sent out is—at least—not lessening—but there is gradually "arriving" a legitimate system of what may be called scheduling Nurses, and this will be more and more a custom as it is recognised as a protection and necessity. For the honour and glory of the great profession of Nursing the names, antecedents, qualifications, characters, references, special talents and specific tendencies of work must come to be (more and more) a systematised record. We ought to be able—just as in the case of a doctor—to turn to a Directory and ascertain something about those we employ. The information may be crystallised brevity, but it may be also the condensation of accuracy. And not that only. But the very fact of a kept and published record being the custom of the Nursing cult would be a satisfaction to those who have to administer in the Sick Room, and a guarantee as to the desire of the great and glorious Sisterhood to keep their ranks 'well dressed.' A doctor who practised—and practised in a large way—in the

year 1842, and at Woolwich—that was his zenith-date or about then—told me that in his day—when you could get a Nurse to come at all—you always sought to ascertain 'if she drank much'—it never occurred to you to ask 'if she was strictly sober'—the formula often seals the fact—and if this interrogatory be a true version of the medical past, its changed form to-day is an eloquent testimony to Sick Room 'betterment.' We may find many Nurses to-day whose nursing might be improved upon, but drunkenness is—so far as I know—now an absolutely unknown vice among the members of the Nursing profession. If this opinion be considered as, too sweepingly optimistic, it is at least founded upon over thirty years pretty active association with Nurses, and with no single professional exception to gainsay its favourable experience. And it is the more remarkable, as, very often, in fact usually, you have not the least notion as to who, exactly, is coming to nurse your case. Centralization obtains in everything, and you have to telephone or telegraph to one of the Central Institutions, name or describe the character of case for which you need a Nurse, and then trust to the next on the roster being the one for you. It is systematised luck and apparently the most vagrant chance but it is wonderful how it all works. Now and then, of course, a change is needed—after your primary experience of your adjutant—but not often. And when your Nurse arrives she usually brings with her her own small armamentarium, thermometer, temperature-chart, note-book, etc., and she at once reduces the intervals between your visits to a system, a record, a series of mechanical but accurate observations and makes the old modern edition of the medical visit of fifty years ago no longer a 'groping' on the part of the practitioner, but saves life very often by the accurate illumination of the case which her written record is. Of course it is desirable that the Nurse should be a scrupulous and honourable woman. By the chance of circumstances, absolutely unknown before, she becomes, of a sudden, the partial confidante—it must be so—of the (perhaps) most sacred secrets and sorrows of the sick. And nobly (as a rule) as her precaution-part of honourable silence is observed, the guarantees are, at present, and without a system of proper registration, insufficient. There is too large a loop-hole by which abuses may creep in. And the good modern Nurse deserves too well of us all to be left—as to her future—to the cold 'chance of chance.' The plain purpose and duty of those who respect her and her work is to back up those who are seeking to make of her profession a registered calling—to heighten the tests of knowledge and

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