

**Matrons in Council.****THE REASONS FOR THE STATE REGISTRATION OF TRAINED NURSES.\***

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I HAVE, firstly, to offer you my sincere thanks for the honour you have conferred upon me in asking me to make a few remarks upon the Registration of Nurses, from the Practitioner's point of view.



The immense development, both in numbers and in influence, which has taken place in late years in nursing ranks, has made the demand for registration one which cannot be neglected and which must be accorded both in justice to the demand of the trained nurses and also for the protection of the medical man, both for his own interests and for those of the public.

It is entirely out of the scope of this paper to trace the gradual evolution of the trained nurse, but the difference between the product of to-day and the object of 30 years ago is certainly very striking. My old chief Dr. D. M. Forbes has told me that, in his time at the Edinburgh Infirmary, the night nurses used to have wash-tubs in the wards and do, at any rate, a certain portion of the laundry work of the Institution during their hours of duty. An institution which advertised now for a nurse laundress or a laundress with a knowledge of nursing, would not be overburdened with applications.

I see in the nursing papers that certain persons are claiming the credit of placing nursing in its present high position, a claim which, if seriously made, would make a boy an authority upon nursing matters at an age when he is usually dodging the attentions of the nursery maid in her endeavours to keep his face and hands clean.

Nursing having been raised to its present powerful position by the devotion and self-sacrifice of its members, and by the sterling work which they have performed, the dignity of registration, has been laboriously earned and should be demanded, not as a favour, but as an inalienable right.

The Practitioner has to view the question from

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two points. Firstly, from its bearing upon his patients, and secondly, from its effect upon himself. These two interests should be, and ought to be, identical and, provided there is loyal co-operation and an absolute obedience on the part of the nurse in carrying out the directions of the Practitioner, then both the patient and the Practitioner will be gainers.

I have not been favoured with the details of any scheme for the proposed registration, but I take it that no person will be registered without proof of a certain number of years' study and practical work in the wards of an institution containing a certain number of beds, and the passing of an examination at the termination of the curriculum.

This part of any scheme bristles with difficulties and will need very careful consideration if it is to enlist the support of medical men and not estrange the sympathies of the authorities of the smaller Hospitals, particularly those where a resident medical man is *not* attached.

At present, unless one applies to a Hospital or Training School of repute, one has absolutely no guarantee that a nurse supplied, has had any sort of training at all.

In the great majority of cases, the private nurse is supplied by a local Nursing Home, which is usually run by a lay woman. The case is, perhaps, urgent, and the doctor has to take just whatever person is sent to him, and the size and magnificence of her accoutrements is, as a rule, inversely as the character of her training.

I have more than one of these so-called Homes in my mind where persons of three months' experience are foisted upon the public as trained nurses. And these girls are sweated in a disgraceful manner, £2 2s. or more weekly being received for their services, and 10s. 6d. being paid to them, and out of this miserable proportion of their earnings they have to provide their uniform and their tools.

I came across another flagrant case in a country town, where an ambitious but thoroughly unscrupulous medical man started a so-called hospital, and, by the way, if you can secure the presence of a few good names upon the Committee and can get enough money to keep a paid secretary, there will be no difficulty about funds. Bazaars, bicycle gymkanas and *soirées* chantants follow as a matter of course.

This special Hospital had one trained nurse upon its staff and some dozens of young girls of about 18 or 20 years of age, who, after as little as a month's work in this place, were sent out as trained nurses.

Impositions of this nature should be made

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