

of money, but thousands of valuable lives to uphold this principle; it is, therefore, an accepted rule for legislation and even for warfare, and why should it not apply to us as well.

If women are ready to give their money and their work in order to fit themselves for the care of the sick, why should they be refused the power that has been granted to the medical practitioners to protect their branch of the Profession by Registration from ignorant would-be rivals. At this present time, public attention has been called to the Nursing Profession by the course of events in South Africa; praise and blame have both been called forth by the arrangements for the care of the sick in the Hospitals there. The medical staff have, apparently, nothing but praise to give for the thoroughly qualified nurses who have been their helpers in their endeavours to combat death and disease. But what are we to say of those persons who have, in some strange way, assumed the title and imitated, in a fashion, the dress of a trained nurse, whose self-complacency is only surpassed by their ignorance, and whose levity of conduct has called for reproof both from Generals and Surgeons? Is it not time to put a stop to such masquerading in nurses' uniform, which degrades the real nurse in the eyes of the public. Nothing but legal Registration will prevent the recurrence of such a scandal as has been witnessed in South Africa. Were such a Register in existence for nurses as there is for doctors and surgeons, the War Office might simply lay down a rule that no application from an unregistered person would be received in connection with the Army Nursing Reserve; consequently, the superficial and informal examination into qualifications by unqualified persons might be avoided, and nurses would not be sent to the front with six months' training as a preparation for a task which tests severely the skill and endurance acquired by years of nursing.

However, we need not go as far as South Africa to find abuses which can only be remedied by Registration. What about all the Private Nursing Institutions worked by individuals or committees as a speculation? How many nurses are working in connection with such Homes. The Matron or Secretary does not, as a rule, care whether the nurse has a certificate at all, and as for a Matron's recommendation, it is so much wastepaper. What they require is someone who will wear cap and apron, look smart, and be shrewd enough to hide her ignorance, and the public accept such as trained nurses. I know of several women refused a certificate by their training school who found no difficulty in obtaining work on the staff of

Private Nursing Institutions. I know of one dismissed from five different training schools (I was instrumental in turning her out of three myself) who, by means of false testimonials, got on to an excellently managed Private Staff. Such scandals could not exist were Registration a legal necessity. If further reasons are to be sought, they may be easily found; for instance, in the need for a uniform standard of proficiency to be required of every nurse before she can qualify. I refer, of course, to a minimum of proficiency; this would especially be useful in regard to nurses seeking Hospital appointments; under existing arrangements, no definite standard is possible.

The necessity for Registration being granted, the next question is how is it to be obtained? I confess it is easier to admit the need than to tell you how to obtain the end desired, and I hope that some of those present who are more conversant with what is called wire-pulling than I am, will take into consideration the ways and means of effecting our object. We can only get what we want from the highest authorities, we must not be content with anything less than a legal registration. If we could count on the willingness of Government authorities, we should find no difficulty, I feel sure, in agreeing on some scheme of education such as that of the L.O.S., only that an entrance examination would be necessary, as well as a final, with a Hospital certificate of work done in the wards of General, Fever, and Maternity Hospitals, for not less than three or four years.

I cannot help thinking that, in the near future, some one or other of the more liberal-minded of the Universities will add a course of instruction or, if not, possibly examinations, on the principle of the Royal University in Dublin, to enable nurses to qualify for superior posts in the nursing world, in the same way as women aspiring to be first-class teachers do now. I believe, if this could be accomplished, a great advance would be made towards State Registration. I know the matter has been brought before the University of Durham lately, and the suggestion was received in a much more friendly spirit than is usually the case when women venture to ask for the same chances of obtaining knowledge and equipping themselves for the battle of life, as their more fortunate brothers for centuries past have enjoyed.

The difficulty of combining is great; practical duties prevent our being free at all times to avail ourselves of opportunities such as the present, and purses not overfilled with this world's wealth prevent our founding Professor's Chairs or Studentships to be competed for; but we can endeavour to educate public opinion and urge

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)