

all certificated Nurses might join, so that the more progressive members might instruct and educate the conservative members to a higher standard, and all work for a minimum standard of three years' training and State Registration.

Surely, it cannot be a *National League of Certificated Nurses* when the members are to consist exclusively of three years' nurses, whilst there are so many who hold certificates for shorter periods.

I presume the "League" will work for State Registration. They will probably have no objection to accepting all the help they can get from those who do not hold the three years' certificate, to obtain the title of "Members of the National League of Registered Nurses," and all the benefits which State Registration mean.

Whilst those who have worked in countless although unseen ways for professional progress will probably be deprived of their means of livelihood unless they go in for re-examination.

This I know is looking very far forward, but "Unity is Strength," and who knows when a really National League is formed how soon we may get that which at present seems very far off—State Registration.

Apologizing for the length of my letter.

I am, Yours faithfully,

MARY BURR.

45, Sussex Avenue, Ashford, Kent.

Nov. 18th, 1900.

[Any opinion expressed by Miss Mary Burr—herself a trained nurse imbued with a strong sense of professional responsibility—will always receive the consideration from the readers of this journal which it deserves. Miss Burr, as an early member of the Royal British Nurses' Association, who worked loyally for the Royal Charter in the good old days, knows intimately the vicissitudes through which the nursing question has passed in the last decade.

The Founders of the R.B.N.A. recognised thirteen years ago when they started to organise nurses into a professional body, that a time of grace was necessary, and for several years the benefits of the Association were freely offered to all reputable nurses who had been engaged in nursing the sick for three years, but those Founders never lost sight of the fact that year by year it would be necessary to work for a higher and higher standard of education and efficiency for nurses, and by the most arduous labour, having won the Royal Charter, they conscientiously set about utilising it for the benefit of nurses and the sick.

The result is now an old story. The determined opposition of an autocratic medical faction to any progressive measure, any step forward for the real professional benefit of nurses, the private meetings of this clique, the packing of Council and Committee by nurses dependent upon their patronage, the complete alteration of the bye-laws, depriving nurse members of their liberty of speech and action, the determined depreciation of the professional status of the nurse, the denial of the first principles upon which the Association was founded, and ultimately the suppression of the Register of Trained Nurses, and in consequence a free hand given to every species of quack. The effects of the whole discreditable business have sunk deeply into the minds of those intimately associated with its development, and the injustice inflicted upon their colleagues, has made them quite determined that an effort shall be made to obtain just recognition

from the public for those nurses who have spent years of their lives in acquiring an efficient training, and who are women of high moral character. Some minimum standard must be adopted, and justice to nurses demands that those who have worked for, and earned a three years' certificate, shall receive a just mark of distinction—it is eminently unfair that they should continue to be classed with the monstrous army of semi or untrained women, who now compete with them in the open market, take their fees, and cause confusion worse confounded in the public mind on nursing affairs.

The whole question of nursing organization is a difficult one, but years have passed, and those who deny to the trained nurse efficient education, just conditions of labour, legal status, and liberty of conscience, are just as intolerant to-day as they were ten years ago. The trained nurse must realise her own independence, and organise on self-governing lines. She must decide upon some definite standard, and the three years' certificate is her most definite commercial and professional asset, so she clings to that, and considering the very deplorable lack of loyalty and co-operation amongst nurses as a class, one can only rejoice that there is something in relation to their profession which they value and hold in honour.

It is proposed that a National League should be composed of delegates from Leagues of Nurses, and, as in the case of all Training School organizations, no doubt every hospital forming a society of its certificated nurses, would for a specified term admit all those who hold its certificate, even if in the past that certificate was given for a shorter period than three years—this seems only just, and a precedent for such procedure has been established by the formation of the League of St. Bartholomew's Hospital Nurses, which includes graduates holding one and two years' certificates awarded from the years 1878 to 1882, in which year the term of training was raised to a three years' course. In organising a National League of Nurses, we are of opinion that the three years' curriculum of training, and certification after examination is the right standard to adopt for membership, and that all Societies affiliated should maintain this as a minimum standard at the present time. Nurses have waited all too long for others to protect their interests, they must now act for themselves, or find their professional position depreciate.—Ed.]

DEAD SEA FRUIT.

To the Editor of the "Nursing Record."

MADAM,—No nurse who has held office as a Superintendent Nurse in workhouse wards, can read about the treatment of Miss Rogers, at the East Preston Union, without a fellow feeling. I have tried it, and it is simply an impossible position, and a heart breaking one to a conscientious woman. I gave it up because the *hopeless ignorance* of the Guardians made it impossible to convince them of what was wrong, and a constant striving against injustice and discourtesy aroused such a keen sense of injury and disturbance in one's mind, that no good work resulted from almost superhuman exertion—nothing but disappointment and dead sea fruit. I would rather be a ward assistant in a well-organised ward.

Yours, S. T.

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