

The plan adopted in England of incorporating in the proposed Bill a specified time in which these nurses could apply for a licence to practise in the State seems eminently fair. I should say, however, most emphatically that this would not apply to those persons who had never entered a training-school, or who, having entered one, had not completed the course.

Whether membership shall be composite or individual has not been fully determined upon. The balance of opinion is for individual membership in this State, as the outlying training-schools are very few, and this seems the only plan upon which the nurses could be brought together. We have been admitted to the Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs of the State, and have been endorsed by the prominent women's clubs of the State. The best newspapers of the city have aided us by endeavouring to create a sentiment in favour of this movement throughout the State, so that the Bill will be more intelligently received when presented for passage. We have official action from all the medical societies of the State. While this object may be gained by our united efforts, only universal *esprit de corps* and determination on the part of the nurses to keep the standard high will make recognition by the State worth while.

We, the members of the Illinois State Association, look forward with pleasure to the co-operation and assistance that must be felt from contact with the broader experience and knowledge of this national body.

#### FROM THE STATE OF VIRGINIA.

President: We shall be glad to hear what Virginia is doing if Miss Cocke will be kind enough to tell us.

Miss Cocke spoke as follows:—

Though Virginia was, I believe, the second State to follow the lead of New York in the organisation of a State Nurses' Association, we are moving very slowly in our work and feeling our way very carefully as regards legislation, fearing to injure the cause we have at heart by any unwise or hasty action. Many of our legislators are "old fogeys" in their ideas, and the measures we present in our application for a charter have to be carefully framed, else they will be vetoed in the start.

As far as the nurses are concerned, all who have been approached are interested in the scheme for the State Association and ultimately State registration, but the nursing profession in Virginia needs an impetus and uplifting upon more advanced lines of education. So far the majority of women in the State have entered the field mainly as a means of self-support, and in the effort at wage-earning fail to realise and carry forward its higher ideals. This is more their misfortune than their fault, and it is through the State Association that we are trying to reach the individual nurse and call her attention to what the nursing profession means to its members and requires of them.

At present, members are admitted upon rather a liberal basis, but we propose to adopt stricter rules and admit only those holding diplomas from training-schools which give a three years' course.

The objects of the State Association are those embodied in Article II. of the constitution of the Associated Alumnae,—viz., to establish and maintain a

code of ethics; to elevate the standard of nursing education; to promote the usefulness and honour, the financial and other interests of the nursing profession, and ultimately to obtain registration.

#### FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK.

President: The report of New York State was written by Miss Dock. She is unable to be present, and it will be presented by Miss Keating, of Buffalo, also a member from New York.

Miss Keating read as follows:—

It seems to me important that in beginning to legislate we should set our wishes and aims in two columns—those which are possible through the law, and those which are impossible. That will prevent us from imagining, or letting others imagine, that all the abuses existing in our profession will be at once corrected when we get a nursing law passed.

There are certain important things which we can reach through the law. There are others, more important still, which we cannot reach thus.

We must decide on the most fundamental *possibility* of the law and work for that, yet always recognising its limitations.

The fundamental possibility of law is that we can through it affect and improve the course of training given by training-schools. We can work for that, and we must.

The limitation is that not through or by any act of legislation can we make an *ethical* and *honourable* woman. That is the impossibility; and so, after all our work in law-making is done, we have only effected the *lesser* thing, and left the greater untouched, for the *woman* will always be the *most* important thing—more important than her education—though we realise the great importance of that.

Let us not imagine, therefore, that we shall put the unethical nurse out of existence by getting legal status. We can only eradicate her by a slow process of moral force, moral and ethical education, and the stimulation of high standards upheld by the organised body of nurses. If we could feel sure that *only* the discarded probationer or the spurious nurse did the deeds of ill-repute, we could fondly hope that everything would be done when we got legal status. Unfortunately, we all know that discredit is sometimes brought on our profession by those holding an irreproachable diploma.

The two forces must therefore work side by side to attain the best results; on the technical side, the power and authority of the law; on the ethical side, the moral force of the head of the school, her assistants, and the whole army of those who are serious-minded and proud of their calling.

#### DISCUSSION.

President: We now have a half-hour for discussion, and I hope all the members will express their views very generally upon this subject. What are they doing in Massachusetts?

Miss Riddle: Madam President, they are moving slowly. I have just been informed here to-night that the members of the medical profession were thirty years in getting State registration in Massachusetts. What do you think of our prospects?

President: Is Pennsylvania moving as slowly as Massachusetts, Miss Rudden?

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)