

sequence, carry the self-same principle into Nursing matters. In other words, it is contended that the public have not only an urgent need but also a prescriptive right, in view of the above examples, to demand some measure of protection against the hundreds of entirely ignorant Midwives and Nurses who are, it is well known, now at work in its midst. To our minds the argument is unanswerable; and it is worthy of note that the few who oppose Registration—for their own private reasons—have made no attempt to deny or explain away the facts upon which the proposal for its initiation is based.

But, again, there is no proof given in this document of the vast importance of this measure to well-trained Nurses who have to work for their daily bread in keen competition with women who have perchance never been inside the Wards of a Hospital; nor to Medical men, who frequently have to take a Nurse's knowledge and experience upon trust, because they have no official guarantee of her efficiency. Perhaps she has been sent to his patient's house by some friend or relative of the sick man, who by hearsay or experience imagined her to be everything which could be desired. We mention this method of obtaining a Private Nurse's services, because in the latest and most flagrant example of most utter ignorance and dangerous incompetency of which we have heard, the Nurse was obtained by the patient in this manner; and it was only when a disaster occurred that the Medical man discovered that she had not been obtained from a well-known Nursing Institution.

All that this circular evidently attempts to do is to prove the importance to Hospitals, for their own credit's sake, that there should be instituted a system whereby the Certificates which they bestow upon their deserving pupils should be so officially enrolled upon one common, easily obtainable Register, that the public can, with a minimum of trouble, time, and expense, discover whether any given woman is a Trained Midwife or Nurse or not. But this is only half the good which is to be derived from the system. Because most justly attention is called to the notorious fact that at present there is no power of control over the black sheep who exist in Nursing, as in all other callings. In other professions some power of expulsion, or at least of discipline, over the members is enforced, for the credit and welfare of the majority, and of the vocation itself. And we have no hesitation in saying that Registration without this power of purging the Register from the name of any Midwife or Nurse who disgraced herself would be not only valueless, but a distinct danger as well, because it would be conferring a "title to public confidence," which, if not revocable at need, might be abused and become a mere pitfall for the public.

But it is well known that from the very first the essential necessity of thus keeping the Register clean has been clearly recognised by the British Nurses' Association, and the definite scheme now advanced proves that this measure will be carefully safeguarded in this respect. And so we arrive at the machinery by which it is proposed that this most important system should be carried out. Our representative at the meeting of the General Council of the Association, held on October 11th, furnished us with the entire scheme then approved of, but we were specially requested not to give it publicity until the Association thought fit to do so itself. But during the last month we have had the opportunity of carefully considering the matter, and can now unhesitatingly express our conviction that the plan proposed has not only the merit of great simplicity, but meets every possible requirement of justice, and possesses every requisite for success.

The scheme of a controlling Council to meet twice a year is probably founded upon the constitution and custom of the General Medical Council, but it has avoided defects from which this latter body is certainly not free. We greatly admire the bold conception and keen "sense of the fitness of things," which has produced this idea of a great Nursing Council, and which has led the Association to propose that the question of Registration, in which Hospitals are so largely and separately interested, should be undertaken by a body, to be composed so largely of representatives directly chosen by the Nurse Training Schools. There can be little doubt what the reply to this courteous circular will be from the majority of these Institutions. Their managers are wise enough to see that a measure of professional reform, which nearly three thousand educated women have banded themselves together to obtain, under the Presidency of a daughter of our revered Queen, and with the active moral or practical support of a large number of the most eminent medical men all over these kingdoms, will certainly, sooner or later, be obtained. And when they find that this reform is no new innovation—no infringement on their privileges, rights, or powers—but only and alone a safeguard, similar to that granted to the public in the case of other professions by the law of the land, they will feel convinced that its success is absolutely secure. Then it is almost certain that each Institution interested in the matter will be desirous of possessing a voice in its direction and management, and when the opportunity of obtaining that share is courteously and freely offered to it, will willingly accept the privilege. Thus we should naturally argue, at least, and so we are not surprised to hear of large

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)