

The Registration of Nurses.

To the Editor of the "British Journal of Nursing."

DEAR MADAM,—I had the pleasure of listening to your admirable address at the Royal Albert Edward Infirmary on the 11th inst. I did intend to make a few observations after you had concluded, but was obliged to leave. What I wanted to say was that I agreed entirely with the views you then expressed. I am old enough to know something of the working of the Medical Acts of 1856 and 1886. I remember the registration of chemists and druggists and dentists, and now shall, if I live long enough, see something of the effects of the registration of midwives; and if nursing as an occupation is to attain to the dignity of a profession, some State recognition must be given in the form of Registration. A Board of Registration will need of necessity to be formed, and all who are at present *bonâ fide* occupied as nurses will have to be entered on the register, and afterwards a curriculum will need to be drawn up as to the training of nurses and future admission to the register. Whether there should be one portal system or the certificates of a number of the present training schools recognised or not is a matter of detail. I fancy a number of them will have to be retained, just as our medical corporations and universities are retained. It will take years before the system improves off the face of the earth the woman who has a "vocation" for nursing, or the three, six, and twelve months' certificated nurses; but if Registration and control are established, time will enable those who adopt the profession to be recognised as competent nurses, and the public will be enabled to obtain the services of one who has been properly educated and trained. When I look back and remember the little grocers who sold Epsom salts, castor oil, calcined magnesia, saltpetre, &c., entered upon the register of chemists and druggists, and now see the educated chemist, I can only wonder why Parliament was so slow to recognise that the dealer of drugs and compounder of prescriptions should have been so long without proper recognition. Of course, the law now is not a perfect protection; the herbalist keeps his drug shop without let or hindrance so long as he does not sell poisons. Again, the case of the dentists—well, every village blacksmith who could draw or knock out a tooth, every druggist or his assistant who could take out a tooth, was placed on the register, and now the dentist has to undergo an education preliminary and professional equal to the ordinary medical practitioner. Yet we find men practising as dentists labelled as the makers of artificial teeth. Anyone can practise as a medical practitioner if he does not use the title of doctor or imply that he is registered. Of course, he needs to mind not to practise as an apothecary, or the Apothecaries' Society will be seeking to receive a fine of

£20. Still, with all this, the public are protected by the registration of the medical man, the dentist, and of the chemist and druggist.

We are so afraid of the "liberty of the subject" that in all measures which really are for the public good suspicion plays an important part; the profession which tries to improve itself and raise the status of its members is thought to be looking after its own selfish ends. The profession of music, which is seeking at the present time a registration of its professors (who follow the occupation of teaching), is suffering from this disability. The nursing profession will have the same opposition, but by keeping "pegging away," as we say in Lancashire, the opposition will vanish, good will be done for the public, and the nursing profession elevated.

It is, perhaps, a little too early to criticise Mr. Bryan's letter, because the first thing to do is to get Registration established by law. A Nursing Board of Control and Registration will be necessary, and they will draw up rules and by-laws for the admission to the register. There is one thing certain, that no nursing certificate should be given without a three years' training. Fever nurses and midwifery nurses should have this training, as well as twelve months' more training in the particular specialty they wish to follow.

Wishing you success in the undertaking you have at heart,—I remain, Yours faithfully,

WM. BERRY,
Senior Hon. Medical Officer and
Chairman of the Board of Management,
Royal Albert Edward Infirmary, Wigan.

PROGRESS IN THE UNITED STATES.

At a meeting of the graduate nurses of Detroit, Michigan, on December 12th, an organisation was formed to be known as "The Graduate Nurses' Association of Detroit," the object of which is to secure State Registration and advance all other interests of the profession.

The regular monthly meeting of the New England Hospital Alumnae Association, Boston, was recently held at the hospital. A large number was present. The subjects discussed were "State Registration" and the "Club House." A committee on State Registration was nominated.

At the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Boston City Hospital Training-School for Nurses, which was held in the reception hall of the palatial Voce House Nurses' Home, Miss Linda Richards, a late superintendent of nurses, emphasised the need of State Registration of Nurses to prevent such catastrophies as the Jane Toppan murders. She closed an eloquent address with the appeal that her hearers be alert and conscientious.

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