

The letter was received with prolonged applause.

#### PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS.

Miss Louisa Stevenson then said:—

Ladies,—The various points for discussion this afternoon will be dealt with by experts. I have been asked to say a few words on State Registration of Trained Nurses as it affects the community, and this has already been put in a nutshell in the leaflet issued by the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses as follows:—"It is of supreme importance to the public in cases of illness that their nurses should be competent and trustworthy. At present, unfortunately, the private nursing world is more largely exploited by untrained and unsuitable persons than any other branch of nursing work, and the public pay the fees commanded by trained and experienced nurses for the services of women who are neither one nor the other. When it is realised that between the visits of the medical attendant the nurse is left in sole charge, and that the comfort and even the safety of a patient often depends upon her care and devotion, it will be seen that the stake which the public has in the question of State Registration cannot be exaggerated." Those who have anything to do with nursing know perfectly well how absolutely impossible it is for the public, who have no connection with large hospitals, to judge of the qualifications of the nurse, except by painful experience; many, I doubt not, know what that means.

#### THE DEVELOPMENT OF NURSING.

We, who believe in State Registration for Nurses, are of opinion that there are capabilities for development in nursing work which, if effected, would be of the very greatest advantage to the State and to every section of the community. I sometimes wonder how it is that, in these days of registration of teachers, and registration of plumbers, it is so hard to obtain registration for nurses. I am sure that of the 80,000 nurses at present at work—or, at all events, going about in uniform—in this country, there is a comparatively small number who are entitled to be called trained nurses. Now I think we who believe in the possible development of nursing work are very distinctly of opinion that some steps must be taken, and that speedily, to put nursing upon a proper footing. I know from many Matrons here to-day that many women act as private nurses with no training at all. It is simply wonderful what faith the public has in a uniform. This arises from the fact that, up to the present time, there has been no minimum standard of training for nurses. Every hospital is a law to itself; in some a splendid training is given, in others none at all. Cases have been known of young women who have spent their time in hospitals as ward-maids, or even kitchen-maids, donning a uniform and offering their services to the all-confiding public as nurses, and demanding the fees of a thoroughly-

trained nurse. It is inconceivable that this condition of things can continue. There is a widely-spread opinion and feeling that every woman by virtue of her womanhood is capable of ministering to those who are suffering from pain and sickness; if she has spent two or three weeks in a hospital, so much the better. Few indeed take the trouble to inquire what she learnt there.

#### THE BASIS OF PHYSICAL TRAINING.

We hear much said just now about the poor health of the community. Take the case of our soldiers. I have been looking into the matter, and I find that at least 50 per cent. of the men who enlist for service are rejected on the ground of illness. The great remedy is more physical training. Now I am distinctly of opinion that, until we have better material on which to base this physical training, things can never be right. I have been informed on high authority that there is a great want of efficient nursing for infants and their mothers. What we want to do is to ensure the efficient nursing of mothers, and of their infants from birth. Now we, as our name implies, are asking for the State Registration of Nurses. We believe that there are very great possibilities of improvement in the health of our people from efficient nursing. Many people look at Registration merely as a list of names, certifying that the nurses registered have undergone a certain training.

#### THE QUESTION OF TRAINING.

That is perfectly true, but what it is important that we should realise is this: that if we have State Registration the whole question of nurses' training would receive attention which it has never received yet. That, I consider, is even of more importance than the mere Register. In the first place, we must have preparatory training. We want those women who, perhaps, have been to school until the age of seventeen or eighteen, and are not admitted to the hospitals until they are twenty-three, twenty-four, or twenty-five, to prepare themselves for their future profession during the time they are waiting for admission to the training-schools. Consider the benefit to all concerned if they entered hospitals with a knowledge of domestic economy and sick-room cookery. I am certain that this thing will never be done until we have a central authority defining what the minimum training of every woman shall be before she is allowed to call herself a trained nurse; and if all nursing candidates knew that registration was essential to their success they would, with alacrity and advantage to themselves and the whole community, prepare themselves for this training. We must have a central authority such as they have in America. In New York State, registration is under the Board of Regents. This Board of Regents have asked the State Nurses' Association to recommend to them a certain number of Matrons and nurses, and then the

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