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Editorial.

THE REGISTRATION OF NURSING HOMES.

The need for the registration and supervision of Nursing Homes is admitted by all who know anything of the conditions which frequently prevail in them, but that this public duty should be laid upon a Board concerned with nursing education and registration, as the Bill of the Royal British Nurses' Association ill-advisedly suggests, is as undesirable as it is unfair. Besides, the proposal to obtain an Act of Parliament to provide for the voluntary registration of such Homes is, of course, absurd. It is open to anyone to start a voluntary Register without State sanction, but this will not touch the fringe of the question. If the public is not to be lulled into a false condition of security, not only must such registration be compulsory, but the inspection thorough. The institutions to be included in this supervision will range from well-organised private hospitals to establishments which, though nominally Nursing Homes, are in reality baby farms and houses of evil fame. A Governmental department, such as the Local Government Board, armed with ample compulsory powers, is the only one which should undertake such inspection or can adequately enforce it.

Let us consider briefly what must be included in such inspection. The hygienic and sanitary condition of the institution, and the efficiency or otherwise of the medical, nursing, and domestic arrangements. What special qualifications will the General Nursing Council have for dealing with hygiene and sanitation, and is it right or seemly that the inspection of the medical department should be undertaken by a nursing body? The suggestion is not only ill-advised, but impossible of realisation, and we do not for a moment believe that it will receive the sanction of Parliament.

Nurses who value either their reputation or their pockets should at once express their uncompromising opposition to this proposition,

for not only would the General Nursing Council be constantly in evidence in the law courts as plaintiffs or defendants in connection with their duties in the control of Nursing Homes, but it would certainly be most unfair for the cost of such legal expenses to be defrayed by nurses, as would inevitably be the case. There is no reason why nurses—not at all a wealthy class—should be required to bear this expense any more than any other section of the community, and they will do well at once to repudiate it.

That the Registration of Nurses will indirectly affect Nursing Homes to the benefit of the public is unquestionable, for at once they will know the difference between a trained and an untrained nurse, and will not be satisfied with an unqualified person when they pay fees which will command the services of a fully-trained woman. Neither will Nursing Homes be able to add to their profits by "training" probationers, for the General Nursing Council will certainly not recognise a Nursing Home, with a few beds, as a training-school for nurses. Therefore, the proprietors of such institutions would have to look to other sources of profit, and no longer nurse under false pretences by means of "probationers" who work for a nominal salary on the understanding that the knowledge they acquire thus will enable them eventually to rank as trained nurses.

The registered nurse of the future will be one who has passed through an adequate curriculum of systematised training and education. A private Nursing Home, when well organised, undoubtedly affords valuable experience, of a limited nature, to a nurse who has already been well grounded in her professional work, but is not suited to the acquirement of the all-round knowledge and to afford the insight into a variety of cases which are essential to a thorough groundwork in nursing. In future, therefore, we may expect such Homes to afford post-graduate experience to nurses, which undoubtedly they can do, rather than to offer training to probationers, for which they have not facilities.

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