

tinue until they obtained authority from the State to regulate their calling. The opposition to the demands of the nurses came from employers and their agents, *i.e.*, from those who feared that their vested interests might be prejudicially affected by legislation.

Lady Helen Munro Ferguson, who was most warmly received, said she proposed to make a general statement, leaving others to deal more in detail with the Registration question. The present position of nursing was that those who claimed to belong to its ranks included women with every variety of training, from the highly-skilled hospital Sister to the woman who had spent one or two months in a special hospital. There was at present no minimum standard of education for nurses, and the public could not readily discriminate between the efficient and the inefficient, as the title of nurse was, quite legitimately, appropriated by all these persons; neither had nurses any organisation by means of which they could speak with one voice or listen with one ear.

What the advocates of Registration believed to be necessary to remedy this undesirable condition was the formation of a Nursing Council which would determine the duration and quality of an all-round training which every hospital recognised as a training-school would be required to carry out. Hospital Committees were at present responsible to no professional authority in regard to the provision of an efficient nursing education. Their principal concern was the collection of funds for the maintenance of the institution; nursing education was only a side issue. No profession could be said to be in a satisfactory condition so long as its interests were in the hands of those to whom they were a secondary consideration.

Lady Helen then showed that even the twelve large training-schools of the Metropolis, though they had a Central Council, had so far arrived at no common understanding as to the term and standard of nurse-training. No probationer who entered them was certain of receiving a thorough education. She might obtain experience in only one or two departments of nursing, neither need all the probationary period be spent in *bonâ-fidè* attendance on the sick. The pupil nurse might be employed as Home Sister, or placed in supervision of ward maids, or act as a clerk in the Matron's office—valuable branches of work for future Superintendents, but this experience should be obtained in a post-graduate course.

It was necessary that some sort of Nursing Council should be formed, having the power to recognise certain hospitals or groups of hospitals as training-schools. The whole art of healing was retarded when those to whom doctors looked for co-operation were deficient in the knowledge which they had the right to

expect. The standard throughout the nursing profession, not only in a few hospitals, should be a high one. The advocates of Registration believed that, by giving a recognised status to competent nurses, a good stamp of woman would be attracted to the nursing ranks.

Further, it was impossible, Lady Helen said, to separate the interests of the public from those of the nurses. Every variety of nurse was supplied by institutions, some thoroughly competent, others obtaining their knowledge in the course of experience gained at the cost of the public, who paid the same fees alike to competent and incompetent. If once Registration were established, the public could obtain their nurses from institutions which guaranteed to supply only registered nurses, and which would be bound by the law of contract.

There was very little sound opposition to the principle of Registration; it was directed chiefly against the details of the scheme, which was a very well-known controversial device.

It was said, for instance, that uniformity would tend to depreciate the maintenance of a high standard. This was not the case, because, once a certain uniform minimum standard had been attained, nurses could specialise beyond this standard.

It was said, again, that the authority of the Matrons would be impaired. This was a scarecrow to head off the heads of the profession; under the scheme proposed, Matrons, who would be represented on the governing body, would have additional rather than lessened authority.

It was also said that the value of technical rather than moral qualities would be unduly emphasised by a system of examination. It was difficult to trace this argument to a logical source, for this was not the effect of the examinations now held by most hospitals; on the contrary, an additional value was given to the nurse's certificate by her having given proof of her knowledge in the practical details of her work. The Departmental Committee of the Scottish Local Government Board, which recommended the three years' standard of training as desirable, reported:—

"No definite standard of training exists at present either in Poor Law or in General Hospitals. Each hospital has its own standard, and the value of a certificate of training is measured according to the particular hospital from which it is obtained. We propose, then, with a view to rectifying this so far as poor-house training is concerned, that the Local Government Board should outline a syllabus of training and hold half-yearly examinations at such centres as, say, Edinburgh and Glasgow."

As to the value of training in the development of moral qualities, Lady Helen quoted from the same report the statement of Dr. Sandeman, resident medical officer of the Dundee Poorhouse, who said:—

"Nurses who have been trained in Poor Law work are best fitted to occupy the position of trained

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