

The British Medical Association on Registration.

The debate on the Registration Question which took place at the meeting of the British Medical Association at Oxford, and is published in full in the *British Medical Journal*, is of great interest. It will be remembered that the Council of the Association referred the two Bills for the Registration of Nurses before the House of Commons to its Medico-Political Committee, which subsequently approved and forwarded to the Council a memorandum dealing with both Bills, which memorandum was published in full in our issue of June 11th ult. Sir Victor Horsley, who was in the chair at the meeting at Oxford when the Registration question came up for discussion, said that the memorandum on the Bills was simply explanatory; the Committee did not express an opinion because it felt that so important a subject should be left entirely in the hands of the Representative Meeting as to whether it felt itself prepared to pass a resolution in favour of the registration of nurses.

Dr. Langley Browne, member of the Council and President of the Midland Medical Society, then moved:—

“That this meeting approves of the principle of the Registration of nurses.”

Dr. Browne said it was well known that for many years nurses had tried to get a defined status, and had tried to improve their training all round; they had found that the only way to do so was to get Registration and a Central Board, which would draw up proper rules for the training of nurses, so that medical men might be sure that a nurse whose name appeared on the register had had three years' training. There had been a great deal of opposition to Registration, coming principally from London, but almost every one he had spoken to in the provinces agreed it was desirable, and that a certain minimum training should be insisted upon at all the hospitals before a nurse could get a certificate.

Dr. Kinsey (member of the Council) seconded the motion. He said it constantly happened that a nurse had three months' training in some obstetric hospital and then was engaged at a nursing home or got an introduction to a town or district, and set up on her own account as a trained nurse. Unless there was some Registration which would secure that a general nurse should not be recognised as a nurse without a sufficient amount of training this short period of training might be taken to be something much more valuable than it really was.

Dr. Ward Cousins opposed the resolution, and asked what would be the advantage to the nurse, the public, or the profession, of Registration. Nurses got their employment through the medical profession, and, therefore, it would be no advantage

to a nurse at all to have her placed on a roll. Nurses were not wanted to diagnose disease, but to practise their useful art. Throughout the length and breadth of England there was a class of women who were doing their work well, and there was no need to divide them into two classes—registered and unregistered.

Dr. Gullan, Liverpool Central Division, said he had been instructed to oppose the Registration of nurses very strongly. There was not a medical man who had had any experience, who did not feel this difficulty, but Registration would not bring about a revolution in the character of nurses. Any medical man if he wanted a trained nurse could apply to some of his friends if he was not at a hospital himself. If nurses were registered, there must be a minimum standard, and there would be included not only all the good nurses, but the inferior ones also, who would, by registration, have a higher status than they deserved.

Dr. Allfrey said he would not trouble the meeting with his own private opinions, because his hands were tied. He had received a telegram saying that he was to oppose Registration strongly.

Dr. W. H. Horrocks (Bradford Division) strongly disagreed with what Dr. Ward Cousins had said as to Registration being unfavourable to the profession. In the first place, he thought that everybody would agree that if there were Registration more uniformly trained nurses would be obtained. Then the better trained the nurse was the less likely she was to undertake to diagnose disease. His second point was with regard to quackery. Frequently in lay papers it was stated that “Nurse Jones” commended some one's syrup. If there were Registration there would also be a Board for nurses. That point ought to be considered in favour of Registration. The one point against the Bill, to his mind, was the difficulty as to nurses in special hospitals. How was training in special hospitals to count as regards the Registration? He supposed that that point would be considered when the Bill was drafted.

Dr. Sevestre (Leicester Division) went straight for the central point of the Bill when he said that he thought that many of the objectors to Registration had mixed up what might be called the personal element with training. Registration would simply register the fact that the nurse had had three years' training and had passed a minimum and not a maximum examination. The same thing applied in many other professions. It was quite easy for those practitioners who lived in large towns where there were large hospitals to obtain a nurse of whom they knew a great deal, but in small country towns and rural districts the medical practitioner could only rely on the fact that a nurse belonged to an institution without knowing whether she had had three years' training or whether she donned her uniform after a quite insufficient experience. It

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