

that each State, as it adopts laws for the Registration of Nurses, will profit by what the other States have struggled for and gained and make their standards higher.

There can hardly be said to be opposition to the idea of State Registration for Nurses in the United States. The necessity for Registration is recognised, and the nurses have the support of the medical profession and the public, but there has been from the beginning some opposition to the idea of nurses acting independently for themselves, evinced by what I may call the petty element in the medical profession, and in Massachusetts and the District of Columbia this influence was strong enough to cause the nurses to withdraw their Bills rather than submit to having registration placed absolutely in the hands of the Board of Medical Examiners, as was attempted by medical men of this petty character in both places.

Broadly speaking, the nurses of the United States have the support of the public and co-operation of the medical profession in their effort for Registration. The opposition has been of a commercial character, emanating from men or institutions with a selfish end to serve, and it is not regarded as a serious obstacle to success.

The indifference of the masses of nurses, their lack of knowledge of what Registration really aims to accomplish, and their purely selfish attitude toward the entire question, is the most serious menace to the success of the movement, and the greatest discouragement to the workers.

The mistake that has been made, if it can be called such, has been undue haste in rushing into legislation before the great rank and file of nurses were sufficiently informed of what such legislation was to accomplish.

In so brief a paper very little of the detail of the work of the different States can be included. I speak with greater assurance of the New York results from direct personal knowledge, and to show the practical value of the application of the law as already recognised I give one illustration.

In New York the registration of the other professions has been so long an established feature of the Regents of the University of the State (the State Board of Education) that in securing the Registration of Nurses only another department had to be added to the work of the Regents' Office. The most important and far-reaching feature of the New York Bill for the Registration of Nurses is the requirement that nurses to be eligible for registration must be graduates from training-schools approved by the Regents of the University as maintaining proper standards.

This makes it necessary that the training-schools shall be registered, not only the schools of New York State, but the schools all over the country, and already training-schools from Maine to California are applying for registration, and, in a great number of instances, have changed their curriculum to conform to the requirements of the University, that their graduates, who flock in great numbers to New York City for both private and institution work, may receive the protection of the New York law.

The Regents of the University called upon the Nurse Board of Examiners to outline the minimum requirements of education which should be exacted from schools applying for registration, and in creating

such requirements it was necessary to consider, not the good schools, but the most inferior in methods and facilities, that the hospitals should not be demoralised by arbitrary requirements in the beginning. One of the conditions to which all schools must conform before being registered by the Regents of the University is that nurses shall be given both practical and theoretical instruction in obstetrics, each nurse to have the care of at least six cases.

It was found that a large number of schools were not teaching obstetrics at all; others gave some practical experience in the houses of the poor without supervision; others averaged two or three cases only, &c. Already most of the schools failing in this particular have provided facilities for meeting this condition. The same holds good of the requirement for experience with children, proper instruction in cooking, &c., and it is from such results that we realise the wonderful power of the law.

With us, before Registration can be complete, legal enactments must be secured in all the forty-five States in the Union.

The important thing is that the nurses in all the States shall stand together for the essentials—*i.e.*, a Nurse Board of Examiners nominated by the State Association, with a voice in fixing the standards of education that shall be required of the training-schools, both preliminary and technical, and, lastly, that in management of the State Association nurses shall never for a moment lose sight of the seriousness and importance of the work they are organised to perform, the working out of a reform that is endless in its scope and that will continue to influence the public at large and the education of the nurses of the future long after the youngest among us has passed away.

The President called upon Lady Hermione Blackwood to read Mrs. Grace Neill's report:—

*In New Zealand.*—An Act to provide for the Registration of Trained Nurses was passed by the Parliament of New Zealand in September, 1901, and came into operation on January 1st, 1902.

The principal sections of the Act run as follows:—

"From and after the coming into operation of this Act every person who has attained the age of twenty-three years, and is certified as having had three years' training as a nurse in a hospital, together with systematic instruction in theoretical and practical nursing from the medical officer and Matron of that hospital, and who passes an examination from time to time held by examiners appointed under this Act, is entitled to registration on payment of a fee of £1."

"Every person is entitled to registration, on payment of a fee of £1, who holds a certificate from the medical officer or authorities of any hospital out of New Zealand recognised by the Minister under any regulations under this Act, if equivalent in training and examination to what is required from New Zealand nurses under this Act."

And under these sections we have now been working for over two years.

When the Bill was before the House of Representatives, the untrained or partially-trained women styled nurses found many champions. Some members thought that any sort of woman who had habitually nursed the sick for not less than four years should be registered, and a clause was inserted (section 5) to

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)