

THE
BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 848.

SATURDAY, JULY 2, 1904.

Vol. XXXIII.

Editorial.

THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON REGISTRATION.

The announcement which we make in another column that a Select Committee of the House of Commons has been appointed to consider the expediency of providing for the registration of nurses will be received with unqualified satisfaction by those who see in this reform the foundation of the organisation of nursing as a profession.

It must be remembered that before the Medical Acts were passed, and again before legislation in regard to midwives was enacted, inquiries by Select Committees of the House of Commons were held into the desirability of such legislation. Nurses, therefore, have ground for hope that the inquiry into the need for their own Registration, and consequently into the conditions of their education and work, will have the result of placing before the public the imperative necessity for some minimum standard of nursing education, the great risks to which they are subjected so long as any woman who dons a nursing uniform, and has an amount of assurance equalled only by her ignorance, can, and does, undertake the nursing of the public in private houses, in cases of critical illness, in which the care of a skilful nurse may make the difference between life and death. The injustice of this condition is the more marked because the public, who have no means of discriminating between efficient and inefficient and ignorant nurses, pay the same fees to both.

Again, the injustice to thoroughly-trained nurses is also great. In no other profession do qualified and unqualified alike compete in the open market on the same terms. Yet a nurse who has given years of hard work to fit herself for the responsible duties she is called upon to perform may have to work in conjunction with a quite incompetent woman, who, by her ignorance, may render ineffective all the care and good work of the trained nurse. The latter, however, finds it almost impossible to

explain the inefficiency of her colleague, as there is at present no standard of nursing education, and the woman with a two months' training claims the name of trained nurse equally with the one holding a three years' certificate. Thus, not only does much of the work which rightfully belongs to qualified nurses pass into the hands of unqualified and undisciplined women, but well-trained nurses are held responsible for the inefficient work, and frequently the unseemly behaviour, of women who do not belong to their ranks, with the result that nurses have of recent years lost much in prestige, and in the position in public estimation which they formerly held.

It is only necessary to point to current literature to emphasise this fact; whereas the nurse was formerly painted in the rôle of guardian angel, she is now more often portrayed as the villain of the piece.

The trained nurses of England are a body of women who will compare favourably with those of any other country in personality, skill, endurance, and tenderness. They have earned and deserve the confidence of the community, and the respect due to a body of women workers the value of whose services can never be estimated in cash payments—for the comfort and consolation which the right type of nurse affords to a family in time of sickness are outside the bond of a legal contract. But so long as there is no means of distinguishing between the real and the spurious article, the trained nurse will never be had in the honour which is her due.

We congratulate the nurses of this country, therefore, and more especially the members of the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses, which has been working to this end, on the appointment of the Select Committee on the expediency of providing for the registration of nurses. We can but hope that the result of its deliberations will be to further the cause which we have so closely at heart.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)