

Some Advantages of State Registration.

The holidays are now over, and once more refreshed, and strengthened by fresh associations and change of air, workers are settling down with renewed energy to their allotted tasks.

We, who are working for the betterment of our profession, must concentrate our thoughts on the campaign in which we are engaged.

During the two years since the Society for State Registration was founded the cause has moved apace. Over 1,300 independent women have joined the Society.

Two Bills have been presented to Parliament, and a Select Committee of the House of Commons has been appointed to inquire into the whole nursing question.

A strong resolution supporting Registration by the State was passed by the International Council of Nurses at Berlin in June.

And last, but by no means least, a resolution approving of the principle of State Registration of Nurses was passed by a large majority of the medical men present at the meeting of the British Medical Association at Oxford.

This is not a bad record for such a short period, and tends to show that the need of some control not only exists, but that many—more especially those who are chiefly concerned, viz., doctors and nurses—recognise the need, and are making efforts to get the necessary control. But still among all classes there exists an extraordinary amount of ignorance in regard to the actual meaning of State Registration, and the effects it is likely to produce.

Many and various are the so-called reasons against it.

Therefore, I should like to point out some of the advantages likely to result to all those concerned. And who is not?

As it is a movement originated by nurses for nurses, I will take the nurses' point of view first.

How would State Registration affect nurses, and what are its advantages? It would be the sure foundation upon which we could build our professional superstructure, and without which we are so handicapped that all our efforts to improve or progress are rendered more or less ineffectual. It would mean a more uniform, systematic and thorough training. Is there any nurse, really loving her work, who does not wish that she knew more? And, although in this respect it will not advantage those who are already trained, yet we must strive to get for those who follow us what we would wish to have had for ourselves. Many nurses who to day are called "trained" have not been taught their work, and have learned what they know by experience and practice during the years they spent in hospital wards. True, they may have attended lectures,

but in the hurry-scurry of ward work there is but little time for study, and this picking-up method is not *training*.

And yet hospital authorities sign certificates, and speak of training which has been given in their training-school, without in the least understanding that to train means to instruct, to educate.

It is a uniform and minimum standard of education for which we are striving, so that those who undertake to teach or train shall be kept to their part of the bond, if they want their pupils to take a place in the ranks of skilled nurses.

At present there are women working side by side, the one having given four years for her certificate, the other not as many months, and each receives the same remuneration.

The certificate of a hospital of thirty beds giving a year's training is as sufficient justification for a woman to call herself trained as that of one of the large hospitals where there are both the material and instructors capable of the work of training.

Can this be prevented? Only by State Registration.

It is both unjust to nurses and dangerous for the public that any woman, whether she has been to hospital or not, whether she has been taught her work or not, can pose as a trained nurse and demand the same rate of pay.

State Registration will raise the status of nurses. Those who have given up three or four years of their lives in which to learn their work will have the opportunity of passing an independent examination, which will give them a hall-mark of proficiency, and those nurses who can say "I am a registered nurse," will say, indirectly, "I have been passed by an independent Board of Examiners, who have been satisfied that I am capable of undertaking the care of the sick."

The public will not be slow to recognise the difference, and the natural result will be that the competition in open market of the skilled nurse and those who have no right to that title will quickly disappear. State Registration will provide a means of eliminating not only the mentally unfit, but also the morally deficient. We all know of cases where a nurse quite capable of doing her work is not a fit person to be admitted into the family circle in such a responsible position as a nurse must necessarily occupy.

A nurse's cloak sometimes covers a multitude of sins, and it is not uncommon to hear of nurses, or so-called nurses, as being immoral or criminal. At present, although we bitterly resent these blots upon the honour of our profession, yet we have no power to rid ourselves of them, and we have to suffer not only for the sins of our own black sheep, but for the sins of anyone who may choose to pose as a trained nurse for unworthy purposes.

The means which will be provided to alter this

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