

Miss Hughes then dealt briefly with some of the objections to State Registration. There was first the common one that the public already had too much of the trained nurse, with whom smartness took the place of sympathy, and the case that of the patient, and who gives the maximum amount of trouble in a house. Registration, however, would in no way do away with the need for nice women, who should also be good nurses, and it would treble the responsibility of those who recommended candidates for registration; each school would have an interest in seeing that its nurses were nice women, as well as possessing technical knowledge. At present, once a nurse gets a certificate, no one cares what happens to her afterwards; but under State Registration, supervision would be exercised, and the nurse would periodically have to report herself that the Board might be assured that she was leading a life fit for her work. Another objection was that small hospitals would suffer, but it was argued that by proper organisation the smaller hospitals might be worked with the larger—the latter sending their trained nurses to be matrons and staff nurses of the former, and the former sending their probationers to finish their training in the latter. This system of interchange had been tried on a small scale in London, and had been found to work admirably. A third objection was that there were many women wishing to be nurses who could not afford the time to become fully-trained nurses. Miss Hughes considered that there was plenty of room for them, and that there were hundreds of cases which could be well nursed by a woman not fully trained, and it would always be open to such nurses to complete their training if they found afterwards they wished it. Miss Hughes then mentioned the third scheme at present before the Board of Trade, which provided for a voluntary independent examination, and which could be started at once without an Act of Parliament. She considered that it might meet a need until State Registration could be obtained, as the L.O.S. had done before the passing of the Midwives' Act.

In the course of the discussion that followed, Miss Hughes said that it was proposed that the Central Board should from time to time fix the standard of the examination, and that it would be open to them to institute an investigation in any case where they were not satisfied with the testimonials presented by a nurse when she reported herself. She again emphasised the point that it was not intended in any way to interfere with the ordinary nurse so long as she did not call herself fully trained, or to nullify the public's right of private inquiry as to the abilities and character of a registered nurse, although the fact of being registered would be a guarantee that she was proficient in technical work, and had had the opportunity of learning all she ought to know.

A vote of thanks to Miss Hughes was proposed by Dr. Rutherford and seconded by A. Mann, Esq., J.P., and unanimously carried.

A similar meeting was held on March 24th at the District Nurses' Home, Bristol, by kind permission of the Superintendent, Miss Lloyd. Lady Symes occupied the chair. A resolution was passed *nem. con.* "That this meeting considers that some system of State Registration would be of advantage to the nursing profession and to the public." Miss Errington proposed a vote of thanks to Miss Hughes, which was seconded by Miss Woollam and warmly responded to.

## A Plea for Self-Government.

By Miss L. L. Dock,

*Hon. Secretary International Council of Nurses.*

A couple of years of travel, "the world for to see," and, not least, nursing systems to observe, has left upon my mind two dominant impressions, so vivid that they stand like actual Nature-pictures in my memory.

The first, how amazing and even awe-inspiring are the genius and prowess of man (masculine man) as shown in his castles and cathedrals; his cities; his pictures, statues, and infinitely varied handiwork; his music, his poetry; his victories over nature, as when he pushes back the sea from the coast of Holland, and tunnels, cultivates, and railroads the giant mountains of Switzerland!

The second, how deplorable the mess and failure that he makes, and has made, of nursing systems, nursing education, and nursing standards, whenever and wherever he has controlled them!

Let me emphasise this word "*controlled*." For many men are admirable nurses, and have excellent and sensible views about nursing, and many women are wretched nurses, and have no idea how nursing should be developed. It is the *control* of men, to the exclusion of any control by women, that is, and always has been, pernicious in nursing systems, ruinous for the nurse and cruel to the patient, and, after twenty years of experience, observation, study of nursing history, and application of the faculty of comparison, I do not hesitate to say, and stake my reputation on the statement, that nursing conditions, both for *patient and nurse*, get worse in direct proportion as they are controlled by men, and get better in direct proportion as they are controlled by women.

To this rule I have yet to see a single exception. For, if isolated instances be pointed out where men are apparently in full control and where yet excellent nursing conditions exist, it will invariably be found, upon closer examination, that in such instances the men have had breadth and perception enough to allow or even to invite the ability and initiative of the women to full and unhampered exercise, and have given them the share of authority and of control which is just. Thus, for instance, to the world at large the wonderful development and excellence of Kaiserswerth are ascribed to Pastor Fliedner. But in the yearly reports one reads how every difficult and knotty problem was brought to "Mother" Fliedner (the second wife had the same ability "to warn, to comfort, and command" that the first wife had) by whose clear mind and unerring judgment "every obstacle which before had seemed insuperable, vanished," and tangles which the men could see no way out of became straight and clear.

It is generally admitted to-day that the religious

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)