

## The Select Committee on Nursing

Trained nurses are to be congratulated on the re-appointment of the Select Committee of the House of Commons to inquire into the expediency of providing for the Registration of Nurses. So much interest was shown last Session in the evidence taken by the Committee, that we have no doubt that as soon as it becomes generally realised that it is continuing its work, the Committee Room will be filled to its utmost capacity. The Committee took evidence for the first time this Session on Wednesday, the 12th inst. At the commencement of the proceedings, Mr. C. Hobhouse was in the chair, and there were present Mr. C. Douglas, Mr. Mount, Dr. Hutchinson, Lord Morpeth, Mr. Pierpoint, and Sir J. Batty Tuke.

Miss Christina Forrest, Lady Superintendent of the Victoria Co-operation and Home Hospital, Bournemouth, was first called. She said that she had been trained for 11 months at the Royal Hants County Hospital, Winchester, after which she was Matron of the Children's Hospital, Southsex, Sister at Guy's Hospital, Matron of the County Hospital, York, and Lady Superintendent of the Victoria Co-operation and Home Hospital, Bournemouth, from 1894 to the present time.

Miss Forrest said she would like to offer evidence on the following points:—

1. The great difficulty in discovering what each nurse knows, before engaging her, owing to

(a) Different standards in different hospitals.

(b) Different standards at the same hospitals at different times if officials are changed.

(c) Absolute want of standard or method of education in a large proportion of these institutions.

2. The difficulty of tracing the career of nurses either in their training-school or afterwards. No Register is kept in many instances, officials change, and no record is forthcoming.

Mr. Hobhouse inquired whether the witness had any rule as to the standard of training of the nurses she employed. She replied that in all instances she required a three years' certificate of training, and she wrote to the Matron of the hospital where she was trained for a personal reference. There was often the very greatest difficulty, from various causes, of obtaining such a reference. If she was unable to obtain it, she did not take the nurse.

Mr. Tennant here arrived and took the chair.

Proceeding with her evidence, Miss Forrest said that the difficulty at present, owing to the lack of standard, was that in one hospital a nurse might obtain a good all-round experience, in another, if the Matron were not a good teacher and organiser, everything might go to the wall. The amount which nurses were taught in different schools in three years varied greatly.

Mr. Hobhouse said he understood from this that it was not the term of three years' training which was so important as what was taught and learnt during the period of training.

Miss Forrest said the teaching was most important, but that the period of three years was the shortest, even when the education was well planned, in which an efficient training could be given.

Could it not even at the Royal Hants County Hospital be given in less, enquired Mr. Hobhouse?

Miss Forrest said she considered the period of training which she had had in that institution quite insufficient.

She had suffered agonies subsequently from uncertainty as to whether she was doing the right thing.

Asked as to the size of a hospital for training purposes, she said that if the training were good she considered that a sound education should be obtainable in a hospital of fifty beds in a period of three years. At present there was an absolute lack of any standard, it depended entirely upon the competency of the Matron. If State Registration were enforced, the Committees of Hospitals would be bound to see that the Matrons maintained the required standard. If the nurses of a given hospital passed the State examination, as a rule, it would be a proof that that hospital gave a proper training. If they did not, it might be considered that the reverse was the case. The nurses who entered for the State examination would, of course, have to produce a certificate of satisfactory work and conduct from the Matrons of their training-schools.

Asked if the Matrons of the hospitals would, under a system of registration, be appointed by the Central Nursing Council, Miss Forrest replied *no*. They would be appointed by the hospital committees, but the committees would find it necessary to appoint, in all instances, Matrons who were capable of systematically training probationers.

Asked if a nurse when once registered would not be removed from the cognizance of the Registration Board. Miss Forrest said she was of opinion that registered nurses should report periodically to the Board in order that the Board might know that they were still living, where they were, and whether they had married. There was great difficulty in tracing nurses when they changed their names.

In reply to a question, Miss Forrest said it was not proposed to make it penal for a nurse to be trained or to practise as a nurse if she were unregistered. There would only be a penalty if she described herself as a Registered Nurse. A Registration Act, should, in her opinion, apply to the whole country. London nurses had many advantages which country nurses had not, and it would be a distinct benefit to the well-trained country nurse to be able to produce such evidence as Registration would afford of her efficiency. There were many large provincial hospitals which afforded an excellent training.

Questioned as to whether nurses would be able to afford the expense incidental upon examination and registration as well as that of training, Miss Forrest was of opinion that they would. The expense of training need not be considerable. At York County Hospital the plan adopted was to require a premium of £15 the first year, and the second year the hospital paid the probationer £12, and the third year £20. Or the nurse might receive a small salary the first year, during the three years receiving respectively £8, £10, and £12.

Asked what class of cases were nursed from her institution, Miss Forrest replied, all classes. The nurses might be sent for to patients in any rank of life, from Lady Curzon to a cottage case. In regard to their fees, they might take their own and pay her 10 per cent. commission, or if they preferred it, they might receive a salary with an addition of 5 per cent. for the first two years on their earnings, and 10 per cent. afterwards. The number of untrained, semi-trained, and bogus nurses who applied to her were truly appalling. Out of 460 so-called nurses who applied to her, she took every one she thought would be competent and she was only able to select sixty-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)