

whatever as to how things are to be remedied. Personally, I am not in the least anxious to belong to an unsatisfactory profession.

"We are members, as I said before, of one of the most ancient and honourable callings open to women, and it is for us twentieth-century nurses to bring our work into line with modern thought, modern equipment, and modern science. We may be only tools, but we must take the greatest care that we are the very best tools. Believe me, we cannot lag behind half-ready for our part and plead ignorance as an excuse.

"At the same time, we must never lose sight of the kindness, unselfishness, and humanity that should lie at the root of our work. Those qualities are abstract qualities that can never be registered. But the very best woman is improved as a nurse by being efficient, by knowing her work thoroughly, by having been well trained, and those are qualities that can be registered. When we ask for State Registration we are not asking for the moon. It has long been allowed that a nurse requires to be trained, and we are simply asking the State to define, through a competent council, what is a trained nurse, and then to forbid the title to those who have no right to use it, to assist us to use for training purposes a great deal of material that has been wasted in the past, and to break down the monopoly of the great hospitals. We shall not have it easily; nothing that is worth having is gained without an effort; all progress is strife to the end. There is an excellent German saying, "Selbst ist den Mann," and it is we ourselves who alone can really raise and consolidate our profession. Others, of course, must help and approve, but if the great body of trained nurses desire and demand Registration, that recognition and protection which is their right, they cannot fail to attain it.

"If we do not gain our point to-day we shall to-morrow or the next day, there is no such word as failure if you are convinced your cause is just and honest. And the cause that has for its aim and object solely the desire to increase our efficiency and usefulness, and to protect our profession against its own black sheep and inefficients, can hardly be called extravagant or selfish."

Miss Hobbs, on being called upon to address the meeting, said:—

"I feel after the most interesting and instructive discourses we have heard I have very little left to say.

"I can only endorse every statement and tell you a few things that have led me to feel so strongly the need for the establishment of the State Registration of Nurses as a means of formulating and insisting upon a uniform minimum standard of training and examination, of doing justice to fully-trained nurses, and of protecting the public against those who now so freely impose upon them.

(a) "I received my first shock when, having spent rather more than four years in my training-school, I undertook a post of considerable nursing responsibility, and discovered that of the two nurses whose responsibilities were equal with my own, one had received six months' training in a small special hospital, and had some years' experience in the particular class of work of the institution in which we were then engaged; the other had failed in her trial month at one hospital, and had left another after only a few months' training. Both these women eventually took up private nursing, undertaking any class of case that was offered to them.

(b) "Also, during this same period I came into contact with nurses from one of the largest private nursing homes in London, and from their own showing the greater number of these nurses had at most a few months' or a year's training in a fever hospital, a work-house infirmary, or a lunatic asylum. Yet they were employed regularly, being sent out to the public at full fees, competing with those who had spent three or more years in training. Their conduct also was frivolous and unnurse-like, just the kind of thing one is so often hearing spoken of as the characteristic of the private nurse.

(c) "During my three years as Assistant to the Superintendent of the Nurses' Co-operation—a body of 500 nurses representing almost every hospital in the United Kingdom, containing 100 or more beds—I was constantly brought face to face with the fact that a very small proportion of them had received full instruction in every detail of nursing even ordinary cases, many of them showing a lamentable ignorance of essentials, and this through no fault of their own, but because they had not been in wards where some particular case was nursed, and had never, either in theory or practice, been given the opportunity of acquiring the knowledge.

(d) "Since I have been Secretary of the R.B.N.A., I have had the opportunity of seeing the certificates of almost every hospital in the kingdom containing forty or more beds, and the only matter in which they all appear to agree is in stating the length of time spent by the nurse in their service. Some mention character only, some mention work in the wards only, some mention lectures and examinations, others mention a period of service, not stating definitely how long in the wards and how long on the private staff, and so on. A very few leave nothing to be desired.

"Diverse as is the number and matter of the certificates, so is their value to their owners, and, unfortunately, not one in a hundred of these nurses understands anything of the value of a certificate until she has given her time and strength to obtain it, and has tried afterwards to get employment on its merits!

(e) "Then, again, one writes to a training-school for references a few years after the nurse has left, and in nine cases out of ten the Matron replies that she can give no account of a person who was there so long ago, or that the nurse was trained before she became Matron, and no record is kept.

"Are not these reasons sufficient to make us desire a State authorised body, which alone can have the power to dictate a remedy for the evil?

"Why do the anti-registrationists object? I asked a Matron the other day, and her answer struck me as strange from one who is herself a trained nurse, and is presumably interested in nurses: 'Because, if nurses are once registered they will be so big and important in their own estimation, the medical men will lose all power over them; they will not dare to dismiss them from cases, however unfit they may be, because they will be afraid of an action for libel!' What do you think of the justice of such a reason?

"One more conundrum I ask you to solve. At present the public has no guarantee either that a nurse understands her work or that she is of good character. The State Register will certainly guarantee that she is proficient in her work; but the anti-registrationists tell us 'this Registration will be a positive danger to the public, lulling them into false security.' Why?

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