

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

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

No. 907.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 19, 1905.

Vol. XXXV.

Editorial.

THE NECESSITY FOR A RUBICON.

The Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Registration of Nurses, in Clause 6 of their Report, have embodied the following finding:—

“It has been asserted in some quarters that Registration is rendered requisite by reason of the amount of illegality, immorality, and scandal which at present continues undiscovered and unchecked. It is contended that Registration would be an efficient instrument against these scandals, and would safeguard the public. In the judgment of your Committee, while Registration might prove a means towards checking some abuses, no evidence which has been brought forward substantiates a general charge of moral delinquency.”

Everyone who is acquainted with the work of the trained nurses of the United Kingdom knows that no body of workers has a higher conception of duty, of honourable life, and of self-sacrificing devotion to the obligations of their calling. The tender care which they bestow on the sick, the way in which they daily, as a matter of course calling for and exciting no comment, brave danger and death in the service of the public, the self-control and steadfastness which they constantly exhibit, have their root in principles of the highest order. A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit, and the trained nurse would not be held in the respect, and in many cases the affection with which she is regarded by her patients to-day, had she not proved herself worthy in the fierce light of criticism to which she is subjected. For the public has set a very high standard of personal conduct by which to judge its nurses, placing them, indeed, on much the same level as ministers of religion, who are unsparingly condemned if they do not live up to ideals much above those demanded of the average individual, and any falling short of attainment is quickly noted and condemned.

It may be unhesitatingly stated that no complaint of the prevalence of a low moral standard amongst trained nurses has been brought forward, or laid before the Committee, which statement, indeed, the minutes of evidence will substantiate. No doubt there are some instances in the nursing profession, as well as in every other in which a lapse has unhappily occurred. They are not of common occurrence, and we do not anticipate the work of the Central Body appointed by the State to supervise nursing matters will be onerous on the disciplinary side.

But it is well known that outside the ranks of those who have the right to recognition as trained nurses there is an increasingly large body of women who, attracted by the life and the emoluments of thoroughly-trained nurses, assume their name, their uniform, and their responsibilities, with the assurance bred of ignorance. Thus it is quite common for probationers who have been discharged from their training-schools as unworthy of the responsibilities of a trained nurse to forthwith undertake the nursing of private cases. When in the houses of the public they prove themselves unworthy of trust their misconduct is, under present conditions, laid to the door of the trained nurse. And there are other women who definitely adopt the uniform and the *role* of the trained nurse in order to obtain admission to private houses in a confidential capacity, and so compass their own unlawful ends. Such persons bring grave discredit upon a body of honourable workers to which they do not belong. Therefore, one of the chief reasons why trained nurses are seeking the establishment of a Rubicon between those who have earned the right to be classed as trained and accredited nurses, and those who have not, is that the real may be distinguished from the spurious article. We venture to assert that when this is achieved the Registered Nurses of the Kingdom will be a body of efficient, well-disciplined, and reputable workers, of whom the nation may be proud.

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