

## Progress of State Registration.

Many Bills promoted by private members have been dropped, owing to the advance of the Session, amongst them the two Nurses' Registration Bills.

The Society for the State Registration of Nurses intends to work hard at educating our legislators on this important matter during the coming winter; as its members are spread all over the kingdom, it is to be hoped each one will do her part.

### REGISTRATION DEBATE AT LIVERPOOL.

Members of the Liverpool branch of the National Union of Women Workers assembled in considerable strength at 8, Sandon Terrace, on Wednesday, 12th inst., their quarterly meeting being devoted to a discussion on "State Registration of Nurses." Lady Helen Munro Ferguson expounded the case for Registration with her usual charm and lucidity, while as Mrs. Clare Goslett, of the National Health Society, who was to have led on the negative side, was absent, an outline of the arguments against Registration was given by Mrs. Allan H. Bright, who presided. Dr. Carter, Mr. Herbert Rathbone, C.C., Mrs. Stewart Brown, Mrs. Shilston Watkins, and Miss Calder were among those who took part in the discussion.

Lady Helen Ferguson prefaced her argument by remarking that the profession of nurse was one of the grandest open to women. Indeed, it would be almost true to say that wherever a thorough nurse entered the standard of life was raised. Unfortunately, the profession of nurse had less cohesion and unity than the smallest trade union. Both nurses and hospitals were isolated units. Anyone and everyone might be self-styled a nurse, and thus the skilled and reliable nurses were subjected to most unfair competition, while patients often suffered cruelly. For lack of a standard of training a nurse might leave some hospitals with at most a knowledge of but one or two departments of nursing, or after having actually spent most of her probationary period in the linen closet or the secretarial office. In short, the present chaotic system of hospital certificates offered in many cases no protection whatever to the public. The certificate, once given, could never be withdrawn, no matter what was the nurse's conduct. The remedy proposed was the creation of a Central Board—consisting of medical practitioners, nurses, and representatives of the general public—which would arrange a standard of training and examination, and undertake registration. It was not suggested that the registration should be compulsory, but it would be an offence for an unregistered nurse to represent herself as being registered. The vigour of the opposition to these proposals was surprising, but it seemed largely to emanate from the London Hospital, where naturally there was satisfaction

with the local and efficient training, position, and circumstances. Some opposition came from people interested in "cottage nurses," upon whom it was mistakenly supposed that a slur would be cast. In conclusion, Lady Helen, having incidentally expressed an objection to hospitals making money out of the earnings of nurses sent to private patients, quoted the examples of New Zealand, Cape Colony, and Natal in favour of registration.

Dr. Carter declared himself a strong advocate for the registration of nurses as he had been for the registration of midwives. He gave striking examples, supplementary to several cited by the opening speaker, to show how even medical men were apt to be deceived by the present often haphazard certifying of nurses.

Mr. Rathbone, who had come to hear both sides and kept an open mind, distrusted examination as a sole or reliable test of efficiency. He thought there should be coupled with the examination a testimonial from the Matron under whom the nurse had worked.

Mrs. Bright read a list of opponents of Registration, who included Florence Nightingale and Lord Lister. She pointed out the great importance of character in a nurse, and therefore of supplementing an old certificate by references up to date. The opponents of Registration thought much reform might be effected through an improved system of Registration in the hospitals. It was an objection to Registration that it would limit the supply of nurses, which was already inadequate.

Mrs. Stewart Brown did not wish to see the Matron's certificate in any way put on one side.

After some conversation, in which the nurses present remained silent, though invited to speak, Lady Helen Munro Ferguson was thanked for her lucid exposition.

We are glad to note that the only medical man who spoke expressed himself warmly in favour of Registration.

It has never been proposed by Registrationists that examination "shall be the sole test of a nurse's efficiency," as it is at present for hospital certificates, but that nurses, like other persons, shall give proof that they have acquired a certain minimum standard of knowledge—to unbiassed examiners, and that such examinations should be partly conducted by trained nurses, and therefore would be eminently practical, not as they often are at present by medical men who usually make them unduly theoretical. Without the recommendation of the hospital authorities as to moral fitness, pupil nurses would not be eligible for examination and registration. Matrons do not give certificates now (nor testimonials if they are

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