

The Lord President of the Council on Registration of Nurses.

The Deputation which was received at the Privy Council Office on Thursday in last week by the Right Hon. the Earl of Crewe, Lord President of the Privy Council, received a very sympathetic hearing.

The following ladies and gentlemen formed the Deputation, which was invited and introduced by Mr. H. J. Tennant, M.P. :—Viscount Morpeth, M.P.; Sir John Dickson Poynder, M.F.; Mr. Munro Ferguson, M.P.; Mr. Charles Hobhouse, M.P.; Sir James Crichton Browne, Dr. Bedford Fenwick, Dr. H. Langley Browne, the Lady Helen Munro Ferguson; Mrs. Garrett Fawcett, LL.D.; Miss E. S. Haldane, Chairman Scottish Registration Committee; Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, Hon. President International Council of Nurses; Miss S. E. Hampson, President Irish Nurses' Association; Miss Peter, late General Superintendent Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses; Miss H. L. Pearse, Matron Great Northern Hospital; Miss Mollett, Matron Royal South Hants Hospital, Southampton; Miss Barton, Matron Chelsea Infirmary; Miss C. Forrest, Matron Victoria Nurses' Institute, Bournemouth; and Miss M. Breay, Hon. Sec. Matrons' Council.

Mr. Tennant, in addressing the Lord President, thanked Lord Crewe for his ready assent to receive the Deputation to put before him the case for the Registration of Trained Nurses. In the last two years a Select Committee of the House of Commons, of which he was chairman, had been investigating this interesting matter, and the evidence given had been of a most representative character. He could not pretend that there had been no opposition, but the committee, which had a perfectly open mind on the subject had, after hearing the evidence, presented a unanimous report in favour of State Registration. Mr. Tennant then said that the present Deputation was of a most representative character. It included representatives of metropolitan training schools, members of the medical profession who could be multiplied indefinitely, Matrons and nurses, and Members of the House of Commons.

It was impossible in the time at his disposal to present an exhaustive argument. He would, therefore, leave special points to other members of the Deputation to deal with.

Mr. Tennant then said that an enormous improvement in nursing and nurses had taken place during the last generation, furthermore

improvement should go on. Medical science had greatly developed and it was necessary that nurses should keep pace with the demands upon them. It would be an insult to compare the standing of nursing with that which it held even a generation ago.

But, under the existing system there was no uniformity, no similarity in the standards attained by the nurses of the different schools. The establishment of such standards would benefit both the public and trained nurses. The public required protection from the incompetent. Thoroughly trained nurses needed to be distinguished from them.

In many instances hospital training schools kept no record of the capacity of the nurses who had previously been in their service. On these, and many other grounds the Registration of Nurses by the State was desirable.

Mr. Tennant then called upon Sir James Crichton Browne to address the Lord President.

SIR JAMES CRICHTON BROWNE.

Sir James Crichton Browne said that for some time the Royal British Nurses' Association had felt the need of State Registration. The time had come when the regulation of the education, the supervision, and the Registration of Nurses should be undertaken by the State. An enormous improvement had taken place in nursing without State aid, but that was just why State aid was now necessary. Nursing was no longer a domestic affair, it was a fine art demanding special skill, technical ability, and cultured insight as well as sympathy. Of the possession by a nurse of these qualifications the public had no means of judging. This means Registration would afford. At present women dressed as nurses, and practising as nurses, were going about on equal terms with the fully-trained, the genuine and the spurious side by side.

Also every profession had its moral delinquents, but it was as a protection against incompetency that he specially urged Registration of Nurses as a remedy. At present, regiments of women, with only a smattering of nursing knowledge, were plying for hire. Their manner was engaging and plausible, and their dresses often smarter than those of the thoroughly trained nurses, and even medical men were often deceived by them. Undoubtedly life had been lost, health impaired, and illness protracted through their means. The establishment of a State Register would be evidence that those whose names were found upon it were properly trained, and of good character. It would crystallise and give cohesion to the nursing profession.

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