

Progress of State Registration.

Sir Henry Burdett has *at last* referred to the resolution in favour of State Registration of Nurses passed by the British Medical Association, in a vicious editorial article published in his newspaper last week. Incidentally he puts forward the arrogant claim that at the end of the sixties Mrs. Wardroper (Matron of St. Thomas's Hospital) and Mr. Burdett, "acting in co-operation, by mutual encouragement and persistence, succeeded in securing a number of younger women to be trained on a definite system in the art of nursing, and gradually a change for the better was brought about."

Somehow the honoured name of Florence Nightingale, which Sir Henry Burdett entirely omits to mention, will occur more naturally to the minds of most people as a pioneer to whom Mrs. Wardroper would turn for co-operation and encouragement than that of the young and unknown secretary of the Queen's Hospital, Birmingham. The last time he laid claim to an alliance with Mrs. Wardroper, was at a meeting of the R.B.N.A., at which, as reported in the official organ, he "gave some interesting reminiscences of his experiences in the infancy of trained nursing, when in conjunction with Mrs. Wardroper, he *initiated* the especial training of young women, to take the place in hospitals of the time-honoured old nurses." As was pointed out at the time, he must have been an extremely precocious boy, as when the Nightingale School for Nurses, of which Mrs. Wardroper was Matron, was founded, he was about eleven years of age!

The fact is that Sir Henry Burdett is incensed because the British Medical Association, in spite of all the organised opposition which could be brought to bear upon it, has most strongly and emphatically declared its adhesion to the principle of State Registration of Nurses. Not only so, it has stated that the medical and nursing professions should be adequately and directly represented on any Central Council or Board appointed. It is this *direct* representation, as opposed to the appointment of nominated members, for which the pioneers of Registration have contended, and it is this principle which the most important and representative medical association in the kingdom has endorsed.

Sir Henry Burdett asserts that the Association passed an amendment to this resolution. It did nothing of the kind, as he must be well aware if he has read the official report of the proceedings published in the *British Medical Journal* and the *BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING*. What the Association did was to pass a rider to

the resolution embodying its opinion as to what constituted adequate medical representation.

It naturally endeavoured to safeguard medical interests, and small blame to it. Nursing Associations which have the true interests of their profession at heart have already adopted the same course, and defined what they believe to be adequate representation for their own profession, and, in spite of intimidation from the leader of the opposition they will continue to claim that representation.

The British Medical Association has, of course, incurred the wrath of Sir Henry Burdett in condemning the proposal to substitute a Directory for a Register, an impracticable suggestion for which he and Mr. Sydney Holland (with other members of the Central Hospital Council for London) are primarily responsible. The British Medical Association will have none of it, neither will the intelligent section of the nursing profession.

The truth is that Sir Henry Burdett has failed all along the line in his opposition to the Registration movement. He has failed, in spite of the most unscrupulous opposition to prevent nurses organising to obtain Registration. He failed to persuade the Select Committee of the House of Commons, which reported unanimously in favour of Registration, to adopt his alternative panacea. All over the world public opinion is against him on this matter, and now the British Medical Association has strongly condemned his Directory scheme. No wonder that he has adopted the well-known rule of the game in a legal defence: "If you have a bad case 'abuse plaintiff's attorney.'" All that nurses have to do is disregarding any attempts to mislead them, to work steadily on to the goal which is now in sight.

American nurses are at one with us in the opinion that no registration law is better than bad law. The *American Journal of Nursing* referring to the fact that the legislation season closed in various States without any Registration bills having been passed, says:—

"We have no intimation that such failure reflects discredit in any way upon the State Nurses' Associations. There has been harmony and wise and able leadership in all of these States, but the opposition has been of such a character that success was impossible. As we have said many times, no law is better than a bad law, and we are proud that we nurses have chosen defeat rather than to accept the terms upon which success might have been attained.

"In those States where State Registration is in operation, the results have been all that has been claimed for it."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)