

## Progress of State Registration.

### ANNUAL REPRESENTATIVE MEETING OF THE BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION.

By the courtesy of the Chairman of Council of the British Medical Association and of the Editor of the *British Medical Journal*, we are able to publish an official account of the discussion which took place on the question of the State Registration of Nurses, at the Annual Representative Meeting held at the Caxton Hall, Westminster, on Friday, July 27th.

#### STATE REGISTRATION OF NURSES.

Dr. Langley Browne (Chairman of Council) said that Registration of Nurses had excited much interest in the country. Thousands of self-denying able women had gone through a strenuous course of three years' training in hospitals, and they wanted some means of distinguishing themselves from the persons who merely put on a nursing uniform and then professed to be thoroughly trained nurses. The only way in which that could be done seemed to be through State Registration of Nurses. The Association had, at a previous meeting, supported the movement; but it had met with most strenuous opposition from certain quarters. A few very well-meaning bankers had tried to get a licence approved by the Board of Trade to establish a corner in nurses; these gentlemen did not propose to consult the medical profession, except that they proposed to put one on their Board of management, and he would have been removable at pleasure. The nurses were not considered at all; they were mere chattels. Another way in which the opposition to the proposal for State Registration had been shown had been the deputation to Lord Crewe, President of the Privy Council, on June 14th, when the establishment of a directory of nurses was suggested, and it was maintained that that would do as well as State Registration. That deputation was attended by Mr. Sydney Holland, Sir Thomas Barlow, and Sir Frederick Treves. Mr. Holland asserted that the Lord President had stated that the Government would not support State Registration because there was no consensus of opinion among medical men or the public. Lord Crewe merely informed the deputation that it was impossible for the Government to take up the question this session. Mr. Holland had objected to the Registration of Nurses, because it meant certificates given by medical men; and that it was difficult to get medical men to report honestly. Dr. Langley Browne protested against that statement, and asserted further that the Registration of Nurses was supported by thousands of nurses and by the British Medical Association. He moved:—

"That this meeting approves of the recommendation of the Parliamentary Select Committee that there should be State Registration of Nurses, and is of opinion that on any central Council or Board appointed the medical profession and the nursing profession should be adequately and directly represented."

By "direct" representation he meant representatives of the profession elected in the same way as were the direct representatives of the General Medical Council, or in some other way which would

really mean direct representation, and not merely two or three men in London who wanted to get the whole system into their own hands.

Sir Victor Horsley seconded the motion. As Dr. Langley Browne had explained, the situation was one of critical importance. There was no doubt that the House of Commons was prepared to proceed to deal with State Registration of nurses. It was for the medical profession to safeguard not only its own interests, but also those of the nurses, and by safeguarding the interests of the nursing calling they would safeguard the interests of the public. But this little hole-in-the-corner proposal of a directory had been evolved in the City of London; its promoters were endeavouring to put the control of the nursing calling into the hands of a few gentlemen, and the British Medical Association had been represented at the Board of Trade inquiry into the proposal; it was the opposition of the Association which was the chief element in leading the Board of Trade to refuse its sanction. He mentioned that because there were really persons who were endeavouring to establish a corner in nursing, and to do that under the specious form of a private directory. That was positively put forward as a compromise. He objected to compromise in any case, but this compromise, of all others, was an outrage upon the medical profession and the nursing calling, and, as Dr. Langley Browne had shown, the supporters had made most improper allegations against the medical profession. He hoped the resolution would be accepted.

Dr. Jane Waterston said that at the Cape of Good Hope this difficulty had been solved long ago. The Government had taken it in hand, and every nurse was required to pass a medical examination conducted by medical men belonging to the Medical Council before her name was put on the Government register. If she was not on the Government register she could not recover her fees, and no member of the medical profession would employ her. For people who could not afford to pay for a fully-registered nurse there were women who knew a little nursing, but these women were not on the Government register and could not recover fees. To obtain admission to the Government register a nurse must have gone through three years' definite training in a hospital and pass the Government examination. If she came from England she could not be registered at the Cape unless she had a certificate from England. At the Cape there were two Government examinations, one for midwives and one for nurses; any woman that wished to get on as a midwife and to recover her fees could only do so if she passed the Government examination after proper training. She had been a nurse herself and had very much sympathy with them, but an improperly trained nurse was no use at all. She had been asked what changes she had seen in this country during the eighteen years she had been away. One change she noted was the enormous number of nurses on the streets. Of all evils the existence of an undisciplined mob of nurses was almost the worst. Nurses must be properly trained, properly examined and properly registered and she did not believe anything but a proper register would solve the difficulty. Her country had solved the difficulty and she hoped theirs would soon do so.

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