

## WHAT HAS BEEN DONE.

For years, the Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland was alone in working stedfastly for this reform, but in 1902 the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses was founded, which has not only secured the co-operation of upwards of 2,000 well trained nurses, but has also been a great factor in the education of public opinion. A SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS IN FAVOUR OF STATE REGISTRATION.

In 1905 an important step forward was taken when a Select Committee of the House of Commons—which, under the chairmanship of Mr. H. J. Tennant, had taken exhaustive evidence during two Sessions—unanimously reported to the House of Commons that

“Your Committee are agreed that it is desirable that a Register of Nurses should be kept by a Central Body appointed by the State.”

## LEGISLATION.

On behalf of the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses a Bill “to Regulate the Qualifications of Trained Nurses, and to Provide for their Registration” has been introduced into the House of Commons on four occasions, once by Dr. Farquharson, and three times by Mr. R. C. Munro-Ferguson. It has been backed by members of every party in the House.

## THE LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL ON REGISTRATION.

The Lord President of the Council, on March 8th, 1906, received an influential deputation in favour of Registration of Trained Nurses, introduced by Mr. H. J. Tennant, and, replying to it, said that the subject was one of national importance, that from a study of the evidence, given before the Select Committee, it was apparent that while absolute agreement was not reached there was a strong preponderance of opinion in favour of the scheme, and that it could not be long before the subject engaged the serious attention of Parliament.

## WHAT NURSES WANT.

The movement having attained to its present position it is plain to its supporters that if it is to be brought to a successful issue, strong support in the House of Commons is now essential. The Bill, though repeatedly introduced, has never gained a place in the ballot, and has consequently failed to reach a second reading. If it were fortunate enough to do so, it would probably be blocked or talked out. What is now essential is that members of the House of Commons should acquaint themselves with the reasons for the need of registration, and that the introduction

of a Government Measure dealing with the State Registration of Nurses should be urged within the House. So long as legislation is delayed, so long will the sick suffer needless pain and danger at the hands of incompetent attendants.

## THE OPPOSITION.

The organised opposition to State Registration comes from the Central Hospital Council for London, a body composed of lay and medical representatives of some London Hospitals. Many Hospital Committees, which are at present a law to themselves, object to the limitation of their present powers in connection with their Nursing Departments by what they term “State interference.” This attitude on the part of employers is specially dangerous to the interests of the workers. Thus it may be pointed out that many contracts signed by probationers, binding them to serve an institution for a certain term, are framed by these institutions for their own advantage. The interests of the inexperienced employees are not always safeguarded. They enter into these agreements on the supposition that they will receive a thorough training in nursing. In some cases they do, but no guarantee is afforded in this connection. Further, in some instances a probationer while bound on her side by her agreement to serve a certain term can at any moment be dismissed without any definite notice, and without the previous sanction of the Committee.

Again, each hospital certifies its own probationers, in the large majority of cases, without any independent examination, and without any possibility of uniformity or comparison with the standards of other similar institutions. It is not to the public advantage that such conditions should continue.

The arguments of hospital authorities against Nursing Legislation were laid before the Privy Council in 1893, and before the Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1904 and 1905, and on each occasion failed to influence the judgment finally expressed.

In June, 1906, a Deputation was received by the Lord President of the Council from the Central Hospital Council for London. The Council, which had previously expressed its uncompromising hostility to any system of State Registration for Nurses, recognised, after the report of the Select Committee, that this position was untenable, and came prepared with the suggestion for the publication of an official directory, as apart from a State Register. It was proposed that every nurse trained at a training school for nurses not carried on for gain should be entitled to have her name placed on this directory. It was a

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)