

In Dr. Coutts' first letter he made the definite misstatement that the Society for State Registration had been founded for "upwards of twenty years," during which time only 2,000 nurses "could be induced to join it," and added "In the course of these years, moreover, many who joined have doubtless married or given up nursing, and it is a natural inference that a large proportion of the members of the Society are not engaged in the active practice of their profession."

Mrs. Fenwick corrected this "natural inference" by quoting facts. As is perfectly well known, the State Society was founded in 1902, so that upwards of 2,600 well trained nurses have joined it in six—not in twenty—years, and, with few exceptions, they are still in "active practice of their profession."

In his second letter Dr. Coutts does not apologise for his attempt to misguide the readers of the *British Medical Journal*, but adds more "inferences" of an equally baseless nature. The following will suffice:—

Dr. Coutts writes:—"Lastly there is evidence that in the Colonies registration has resulted in a lowering of the social status and education of those entering the nursing profession, and has led to a diminution of the standard of training. It is further stated that one at least of the legislative bodies has been approached with a view to the course of training being reduced from a three years' to one of two years' duration."

We call upon Dr. Coutts to prove his unwarrantable assertion. In our Colonies State Registration is only in force in New Zealand (Nurses' Registration Act, 1901), and, in South Africa in Cape Colony, Natal, and the Transvaal, under the Medical and Pharmacy Acts.

The exclusion of trained nurses from the registering bodies in South Africa naturally affects their efficiency, but, opinion is unanimous that the Medical Councils which control registration have done good work. There has never been any question of reducing a three years' term of training to one of two years in South Africa. At first the Cape Colony Medical Council accepted a two years' standard of training as sufficient; later this was increased to three years, one of which might however be taken if desired "under the supervision of a licensed medical practitioner." Still later, the Council rescinded this permission on the ground that experience gained under a private practitioner could only be considered as "nursing" and not as "training," as

neither lectures, nor systematic training were possible. The standard for registration has therefore been continuously raised in Cape Colony. In Natal and the Transvaal the three years' standard is also enforced.

So much for South Africa.

Now turn to the official reports and evidence from New Zealand, where the standard for registration is "three years' systematic training in hospital, and passes an examination by examiners appointed under the Act," and where ten nurses are on the Board of Examiners. In the Report, 1908, on Hospitals and Charitable Aid in the Dominion, by Dr. T. H. A. Valentine, the Inspector-General of Hospitals and Charitable Institutions, presented by the Minister in Charge, to both Houses of the General Assembly, by command of his Excellency the Governor, we find it recorded on page 7, "if it is wished that the nurses trained in the Dominion should be recognised throughout the world the standard must not be lowered but rather improved."

His predecessor, Dr. MacGregor, officially reported to both Houses in 1906, "New Zealand has proved by five years' experience the advantage to medical men and the public, as well as to the nursing profession, of having a recognised standard of proficiency, and consequently State Registration."

That disposes of New Zealand.

As the Declaration of American Independence was signed in 1776, we presume Dr. Coutts is not alluding to the proposal made by the managers of a few New York Hospitals, for the sake of economy, to reduce the term of nurse training from three to two years! Anyway, this is what the Chairman of the Board of Nurse Examiners for the State of New York writes in this month's *American Journal of Nursing*, referring to the opposition of physicians and proprietors of small hospitals to a Registration Act for the State of South Carolina.

"Such States will recognise the necessity for registration when they are so without means of protection that all the riff-raff from the registered States (there are already 16) flock over their borders in order to find occupation."

Even when every State in the Union has a registration law, there will still be old England—paradise of quacks—into which the "riff-raff" may project itself without let or hindrance, if the Central Hospital Council for London can damp down professional feeling in this country. But that is just what it can never do.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)