

Progress of State Registration.

FLIGHTY, FLIRTY, DRUNK, AND DOTTY.

On Tuesday, December 7th, at the half-yearly meeting of the General Council of the Cottage Benefit Nursing Association, better known by the name of the Holt-Ockley system, held at Denison Hall, Vauxhall Bridge Road, S.W., the Hon. Sydney Holland, Chairman of the London Hospital, gave an address on the State Registration of Trained Nurses, and criticised the Nurses' Registration Bill.

We are not surprised to find Mr. Holland on the platform of the Cottage Benefit Nursing Association, an Association which maintains and upholds the most inadequate and inefficient standard of any in the kingdom purporting to supply nurses to the sick poor. It is one which we have always publicly and thoroughly condemned, maintaining that the poor are entitled to the same skilled medical and nursing care as the rich, contrary to the opinion held by some aristocratic patronesses of nursing associations for the poor, who, we presume, really believe that there is some fundamental difference in the physical construction of a person with a banking account, and of one without, or the promoters of lay managed nursing associations would not offer to the sick poor, illiterate and half-trained attendants whom they would not admit to their own sick rooms. It is a remnant of feudalism, and a spurious form of charity, which we feel sure will be swept away when the trained nurses of England obtain political power.

The Hon. Albinia Brodrick, who is well-acquainted with the conditions of life amongst the poor, in an article in the *Englishwoman* recently, contended that the impression abroad—notably among many excellent rich and philanthropic women, who employ district nurses—that although it is desirable to have thoroughly trained nurses for themselves and their families, *half-trained and untrained nurses do very nicely for the poor*—is a monstrous idea, striking at the very root of our national life.

The opponents of State Registration of Trained Nurses are invariably those who maintain inadequate standards of nursing education, such as the C.B.N.A., or whose commercial interests will be affected by legislation, and the authorities of the London Hospital, of which Mr. Holland is Chairman, are at the head of a large and extremely lucrative nursing business, and, as such, are naturally fighting against any legislation which might decrease the huge profits they are at present making, so that his reason for joining hands with the C.B.N.A. is evident. But the fact that the private nursing department at the London

Hospital is organised on a strictly commercial basis is proof that the rights of the hundreds of nurses who pass through the hospital should be protected. There are laws on the Statute Book defining the relations of employers and employed in other conditions of life, and the relations of nurses and their employers should be similarly defined. The cloak of charity, under the shelter of which the London and other hospitals have unfairly exploited private nurses should be removed, and a financial statement issued to the public.

Mr. Holland's address to the Council of the Cottage Benefit Nursing Association, resolved itself into an attack on the profession of nursing. He asserted that only the rich would be affected by a Nurses' Registration Act, and that the poor would have the services of the Queen's Jubilee Nurses, and the Cottage Benefit Nursing Association (a very doubtful benefit). He has a fixed idea not only that, for a nurse, the tests of knowledge applicable in the case of doctors and midwives are of secondary importance, but that unless nurses are kept continually under drastic disciplinary control, their characters deteriorate, and that ten years after a nurse had left hospital "probably her character was not so good as it had been." She might become flighty or flirty, or take to drugs or drink. This may, of course, be true of the nurses with whom Mr. Holland has come in contact, but it is a cruel charge to bring against the nursing profession as a whole, and one which we believe "London" nurses will indignantly repudiate. Nothing proves more absolutely the necessity for the establishment of a central governing body for the nursing profession, than the interested attacks of autocratic amateurs upon the work and character of trained nurses. It is intolerable that such attacks should be made by those who are exploiting the modest earnings of a devoted band of women, who as the practical exponents of medical treatment, are working along the lines of social regeneration, and in the last quarter of a century have done more to promote and raise the standard of national health and conduct, to bridge over the chasm between rich and poor, and to enlist the sympathies of the more fortunate for the less fortunate all over the world, than any other class in the community. For the last quarter of a century the authorities of the London Hospital have fought hard for a continuation of their position of privileged irresponsibility, against the efforts of nurses to protect the public from injurious conditions, and it is time that the true inwardness of their opposition should be exposed, and that their hypocritical position towards nursing reform should be abandoned. The real fact is that their pre-

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