

Reply to Open Letter on Registration.

Kneesworth Hall,
Royston, Herts.

DEAR MADAM X.*

May I presume that the writer of the open letter to me is a lady, as the letter is anonymous? I thank you for the tone of your letter, so different to many that have appeared attributing to me every sort of evil motive to account for my attitude on this question. I appreciate this. Candidly, it may be silly and weak to admit it, but I do feel it when the opinion, which I honestly hold because I believe that Registration would be bad for nursing and nurses generally, is attributed to some mean and petty motive. Even you are not quite free of this form of suggestion. You say that my attitude is the outcome of prejudice. Prejudice! Why should I be prejudiced against any suggestion if I thought it would help nurses or nursing? I dislike alluding to myself, but I will ask you whether my whole hospital life of now 15 years has, or has not, been devoted to raising the standard of nursing, and to improving the condition of their work and surroundings? I know this will sound conceited, and will probably be so described, but your letter is personal, and so perhaps just for once I may claim that what I have tried to do may be considered, and "called in aid."

The first paragraph of your letter is devoted to an attack on the "sham nurse," but you know as well as I do that Registration will not touch the sham nurse. If doctors who engage sham nurses now, if doctors who send patients to nursing homes, where only sham nurses are employed, if these doctors are content now, they will be content then. They are careless now, they will be careless then. True Registration would guarantee that a registered nurse had not been convicted of "grossly transgressing the laws of the land." So far so good, but what a little way it takes us! And look on the other side. Registration would be a "continuing guarantee" of a woman who might be unfit to nurse a guinea pig, let alone a human being. Is this not an evil? The advocates on your side are fond of quoting Lord Crewe, who said this was "a question of national importance," but he also said that he would not think of engaging a nurse simply because she was on a Register. I do not pretend to quote his exact words spoken in the House of Lords, but they were to that effect.

An official Directory of Nurses would distinguish the sham from the trained nurse, and, though not an ideal scheme, would at any rate not have the serious objection that being in the Directory was any guarantee of a nurse's fitness for employment. It would only guarantee that she had had the training and experience opposite to her name.

Once more I thank you for the courtesy of your letter.

Yours faithfully,
SYDNEY HOLLAND.

Progress of State Registration.

The Lady Helen Munro Ferguson will preside at the annual meeting of the Society for the State Registration of Nurses, on the 2nd of June, and has kindly consented to give a short address. Lady Helen will speak on the inspiring and unceasing efforts for the advancement of nursing of the late President, Miss Isla Stewart, and those who have previously had the privilege of listening to this most eloquent and charming speaker—for without doubt Lady Helen Munro Ferguson is the finest woman speaker in this country—will gratefully appreciate her kindness in accepting the invitation to take the chair upon an occasion which must bring home to many members of the society their irreparable loss.

In the June issue of the *Nineteenth Century and After*, Mrs. Bedford Fenwick has a paper on "The State Registration of Trained Nurses," in which she writes that the efficiency of trained nursing is impaired at the present time by two causes:—

(1) The chaotic condition of nursing education, and, in consequence, the lack of standards and discipline.

(2) The temptation to purveyors of nurses to supply to the public semi-trained persons at highly profitable rates.

REGISTRATION IN CANADA.

The Canadian Nurse announces that "once more the nurses of Ontario, led by the Provincial Graduate Nurses' Association, have sent out circulars on the subject of Registration for Nurses to Alumnae Associations, Hospital Superintendents, Hospital Boards, and all who are interested in the education of nurses, hoping that in the near future the Parliament of Ontario may consider the subject and pass an Act giving Canadian nurses the same privileges and responsibilities that their sister nurses in many other countries enjoy. In the public interest, the consideration of this question should not be longer delayed. We hope that ere long this reform will be accomplished." We hope so, too; we wish our Canadian Sisters all the success they deserve. Every overseas Dominion that grants legal status to trained nurses makes it more difficult to deny them justice at home.

Registration is so burning a question that it is difficult to keep pace with its progress. Space has not been available for the publication of the interesting replies sent from the various States to Miss L. L. Dock's enquiries. We hope to continue the series of letters next week.

* X is a medical man.—Ed.

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