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Editorial.

UNITY OF PURPOSE.

A most hopeful sign of the growing importance of the movement for the State Registration of Trained Nurses and of the support accorded to it by influential societies, is the Conference which took place on Tuesday afternoon last at the offices of the British Medical Association, under the presidency of Lord Ampthill, with the object of securing united action in regard to State Registration until a satisfactory law has been passed by Parliament. Adhesion to principle of State Registration of so powerful a Society as the British Medical Association would alone be strong evidence in favour of such a measure, but the promotion of a law so intimately affecting nurses must also have their support, and no more forcible demonstration that this support is forthcoming could be accorded than that delegates of influential societies of nurses in the three kingdoms are so keenly anxious for the passage of a law that they were ready to devote a considerable expenditure of time and money to attend the Conference in order to support the object which it had in view.

In face of this united front, the obstruction of the authorities of about a dozen London hospitals must give way. Is it not indeed time that they realised that the law of progress demands their support instead of their opposition to such a measure? A little more than half a century ago training schools for nurses were non-existent—women, generally of mature age and of the charwoman type, were engaged to care for the sick, a phase of which the term “nurse-tender”—not yet wholly extinct—is reminiscent. A little later women of a different stamp, but still almost entirely uneducated, were utilised. Then came the establishment of training schools for nurses, because

hospital committees, stimulated by the example of Miss Florence Nightingale, found that by this method the sick in their charge could be best cared for.

With the establishment of the training school, hospital committees assumed duties of an entirely new character, and became in fact educational authorities, and that in respect to a highly skilled branch of work with the theoretical requirements of which they were not as a rule conversant, and with the technical details of which they were unfamiliar, but the fact that they have assumed these duties carries with it corresponding obligations.

We are the first to admit the great amount of progress which has been achieved in nursing education, but we contend that nursing standards are at present an unknown quantity, that they depend greatly upon the ability of individual matrons, so that even the nursing school of a hospital, at one time efficient, may with a change of Matrons become inefficient. The efficiency of trained nurses is a matter of national importance, and a definite minimum standard should therefore be maintained under state authority.

Is it not time that hospital authorities realised that the insistent demand of trained nurses for the regulation of their profession, and the systematic organisation of nursing education, is a legitimate one, made in the public interest, and should receive their cordial support? We believe that the issues have been obscured, and that many hospital governors do not understand what is involved in the demand of nurses for legal registration. We hope that in the near future any objections they have felt in the past, through a misapprehension of the question, may be entirely removed, and that they will come forward to help a reform which has too long been delayed.

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