

Progress of State Registration.

Miss Albinia Brodrick's paper in the *Fortnightly* is recognised as a most forcible argument in support of statutory registration of trained nurses—the title "Thou Shalt Do No Murder" is very effective. The skilled workers continue to demand legislation, and the employers to denounce it. The truth is that the Bart's business has been a more convincing lesson to the nursing world at large than anything which has previously occurred, and it will bear fruit a thousandfold in the renewed demand for registration, and in the energy with which the demand will be prosecuted.

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick will be pleased to speak during July on the State Registration of Trained Nurses, and explain the details of the Nurses' Registration Bill drafted by the Central Registration Committee to meetings of nurses and others by arrangement, in town or country. She will be glad to hear from others who will take part in this educational work, as every effort must now be made to push this most necessary reform, for the preservation of efficient nursing standards already attained, and the protection of liberty of conscience for professional nurses.

Mr. Sydney Holland in the current issue of the *Nineteenth Century and After*, purporting to reply to Mrs. Bedford Fenwick's article on State Registration of Trained Nurses in that review for June, does not answer her arguments, but offers as "the proper remedy for the present state of things"—which he thus admits needs a remedy—an "Official Directory of Nurses" which suggestion was rejected by the House of Lords in 1908. A Directory is only of value when, as in the case of the Medical Directory, it is based on a previous Register. To place all the different experience obtained by nurses before the public, and ask them to discriminate as to its value—work which can only be done efficiently by an expert professional Board—is not only futile, but a public danger.

Mr. Holland trots out all the old wearisome arguments exploded long ago, and repeats that London Hospital nurses will not register. This is bosh; we know they will. The present régime at the London will pass away, and with it one of the most deplorable episodes in the economic subjection of working women.

John Bull continues his exposé of illicit nursing homes, and has something of interest to say about "Nurses and Undertakers."

"Let me now," the Commissioner writes, "refer to another abuse of the profession that Registration would stop. Nurses of a questionable type are much in evidence when death occurs. They consider they have a right to a commission from the undertaker. Bribery and corruption have been so bad in this direction that undertakers have been compelled to take action.

"Councillor R. W. Hurry is the President of the Undertakers' Society for the Prevention of Secret Commission. This gentleman is probably one of London's largest undertakers, as he conducts over 2,000 funerals annually.

"Great suspicion should be attached to any nurse who is anxious to introduce an undertaker. He assured me that their usual demand is 10 per cent. on the funeral account. Some of these ladies don't stop at demanding a commission on the funeral account, but that they will, whenever possible, recommend a monumental sculptor and demand a commission from him also.

"In discussion of the general question, Mr. Hurry dealt with the burial of infants. Many 'Nursing Homes' thrive on maternity cases. It is comparatively easy to destroy life, but it is quite another thing to get rid of the body. It is generally supposed with a child that has lived a death certificate is required previous to burial. In the ordinary way that is so, but with undertakers in league with nurses everything is easy. No death certificate is required. A five-pound note to the undertaker from the nurse would do the trick, and an unused certificate (of which several are usually on hand) is at once forthcoming. How they come to be on hand was explained to me, and it was even demonstrated to me how an adult body might be got rid of at any London cemetery by collusion between the nurse and undertaker. 'We must purge our ranks,' said Mr. Hurry, 'and in my opinion State Registration of Nurses would at least help us to do it, for with that an accomplished fact we could report any nurse who demanded a funeral commission, and she would then be struck off the rolls.'"

"An Open Letter to Mr. Sydney Holland."

DEAR SIR,

The spirit of your reply to my Open Letter is so admirable that it gives point to the wide difference between your reasoning and your reasonableness.

You ask: "Why should I be prejudiced against any suggestion if I thought it would help nurses and nursing?" While the question is one I cannot answer, let me hasten to point out that the contained criticism had no place in my letter. The line taken in it was that, being prejudiced against registration, you assumed it would harm rather than help the cause you have at heart.

And, having read the latter part of your letter with care, I am compelled regretfully to state once more that your opposition must be the outcome of prejudice. For, after all, prejudice is opinion based on unsound or insufficient data, and yours, as was

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