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Editorial.

"TARRED AND FEATHERED."

The constant appearance in the law courts, and in the dock of persons who claim to be trained nurses, without affording any evidence of training, may well incite every nurse of repute to work without ceasing for the passing of an Act which shall establish a definite standard of training for members of the nursing profession, followed by the registration under prescribed conditions of those who have attained it; for many persons, who claim to be trained nurses, cannot fail to bring an honourable and honoured profession into disrepute with the public who are at present unable to discriminate between those who are and are not what they assume to be.

Last week, in the Westminster Police Court, a case was heard in which the prosecutrix was stated by her solicitor to be a "sick nurse who qualified in South Africa." On enquiry at the Court we were informed that the statement was unsupported by any evidence, but, we may point out, that in South Africa, in the Colonies of Cape Colony, Natal, and in the Transvaal, registration of nurses is in force. Therefore, anyone trained and not registered in any of these Colonies is not a person for whom the nursing profession can be considered responsible. If on the other hand the person concerned in the case under discussion is so registered, the Board which registered her may well consider the question of "infamous conduct in a professional respect" in connection with the circumstances which led to her being "tarred and feathered" by an injured wife. The solicitor for the defence remarked that the letters written by the prosecutrix were of such a disgraceful character that he hardly

cared to read them in court, and the magistrate said that it surprised him that such atrocious letters on both sides should have been written. "The case was not one in which he was inclined to assist anyone. A more unpleasant history one seldom listened to. The wife had had provocation no doubt, but nothing could justify an outrageous assault of this character."

It is not necessary to go into the details of the circumstances which led up to the assault. Suffice it to say that nothing could more forcibly point to the urgent need for the organisation of the nursing profession. It certainly dishonours the profession of nursing when the leading daily paper in the country is able to publish accounts of police court proceedings under such a heading as "A Nurse Tarred and Feathered," and the country is placarded with posters in the same sense. Yet nurses have no power of dealing with the offender, either by proving that she is outside their ranks, or by exercising disciplinary powers.

It is the undoubted right of all professions to be able readily to ascertain whether a claim to membership can be substantiated, and to maintain order and discipline in their ranks.

The disorganisation of the nursing profession in this country must not be laid to the charge of nurses. They have pleaded, for the last twenty-three years, for legislation giving them the necessary powers of professional control. The responsibility must be placed where it rightly belongs, with the small group of London Hospital Chairmen, and the officials in their service, who, for economic reasons, have strenuously opposed legislation to protect the sick, and our honourable profession, and who are apparently content that such scandalous episodes can occur.

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