

The Need for State Registration of Nurses in India.*

By Mrs. W. H. KLOSZ, R.N.

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick and fellow members of the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses,—I consider it a great privilege to speak to you to-day. I am in a unique position in regard to this movement, being registered in the State of Maryland in the United States, a member of the Trained Nurses' Association of India, and also a member of this English Association; and so I felt it to be my duty to respond to our President's request that I should speak to you, and thought that you would recognise in my cosmopolitan interest in nursing my excuse for appearing before you. I had no share in the work for registration in the United States, as I was in India, and only went through the process of registering when the time came, but I hope to be associated with nursing progress in India until registration is accomplished there, although it may be a matter of years, and I am glad to give whatever slight assistance I can to this society.

You have all read of the ancient method of medical relief in India, where the people turned themselves over to the tender mercies of the village barber, who was a more or less sage medicine man, or to some who had gained a reputation for expelling evil spirits. Wonderful stories are told of the superior knowledge of these *hakims*; they are quite generally believed to be able to tell just what you have had to eat by feeling your pulse. My Hindustani teacher was a great admirer of these pseudo doctors, and I think the want of money enough to buy an outfit of medicine and bottles was all that kept him from setting up for himself in the same line. A story which he greatly enjoyed, and saw no reason to disbelieve, related how a man was relieved of some dog fleas which had got into his stomach and worried him by their continual biting. He went to the *hakim* in his trouble and the man, after expressing his sympathy, asked him to dine with him that evening. The two men sat down to a dish of savoury curry, which the *hakim* refused on the pretext that he was on special diet and could not eat meat for a few days. The patient ate heartily and shortly after dinner the *hakim* gave him an emetic, when the fleas all came up adhering to the meat. It was dog's flesh, and they had recognised it and attacked it at once on its arrival in the man's stomach.

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The credulity of the people is almost beyond belief; let a man once establish a name for himself, and impossible cures will be accorded to him. Even of Western doctors who become well known, and win the confidence of numbers of people, positively miraculous stories of surgical operations and other treatment are told. One of these was related to my husband in perfect faith by a man who was well educated, a Sanscrit scholar, a man in good position, and in continual touch with Western minds. The operator in this case was a medical missionary who is one of the best known surgeons in Western India. This is the story:—A woman was brought to the doctor suffering from a uterine tumour. She was pregnant and the tumour was threatening the life of the child. The doctor procured a goat which was also pregnant; he operated on both the woman and the goat, and removing the kids from their mother, placed the human child and the placenta in the uterus of the goat while he took out the tumour, when he returned the child and the placenta to their proper place, and the child lived and the woman recovered.

The system of nursing from time immemorial, where outside help was needed, has been by *dais*. Although this is not exactly a political meeting I think I may be allowed to say, Madam President, that they follow their calling by heredity. These are the midwives of the country, and with the exception of a few centres where a large outside obstetrical practice has been worked up in connection with a hospital these women do the great bulk of the obstetrical work, and qualified men or women see very few cases except those that have baffled the *dais* crude and unclean efforts.

The Government has an admirable system of medical service with a Director General of Civil Hospitals at the Presidency towns, Civil Surgeons in the large towns, medical assistants in the smaller places, and apothecaries in the villages. The many excellent mission hospitals which are scattered throughout the country I need hardly mention, as they have the advantage over the Government of being brought before the public at the May meetings. Their work, especially that for women, is an invaluable supplement to the Government work. The railways and other large employers of labour provide doctors for their staffs and also have hospitals of their own. By these means free medical attendance is within reach of the majority of the people, and yet constantly even those who have come into close touch with European life revert to their old form of treatment. About two years ago we learned that a relative of one of our servants, who lived in our compound, and was

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