

The Ethics of the Anti-Registration Press.

As the report of the proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses, published in Macmillan's lay nursing journal, *The Nursing Times*, was most incorrect in several important particulars, an official correction was sent to the Editor of that journal by the Hon. Secretary, Miss M. Breay. Contrary to the accepted rules of reputable journalism, the official correction has been suppressed, and a misleading editorial statement substituted. The ethics—or lack of ethics—of the anti-registration press in depreciating and misrepresenting the State Registration movement are now so well realised that the animus of the statements referred to have doubtless been taken *cum granum salis* by those who have read them, and at Miss Breay's request we insert her letter:—

To the Editor of the "Nursing Times."

MADAM,—As your report of the Annual Meeting of the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses is ignorantly garbled and incorrect, I have officially to request that in your next issue you will publish this letter.

You state that the President, in her address, said that "The time for patience was now over and militant methods must be tried. The only way to get a thing was to be pertinacious and aggressive, and the question of State Registration having failed to overcome the opposition in the Houses of Parliament, must be brought before the bar of public opinion."

The President's address, which was read from manuscript, and published word for word in the official organ of the Society, THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING, as a protection against such misrepresentation, contains no such statement, nor anything which the most imaginative reporter could construe into such a statement.

Moreover, Registrationists have not failed to convince Parliament of the justice of their plea for Registration. The Annual Report, read and adopted at the meeting in the hearing of your reporter, concluded with the following words:—

"The public is beginning to realise that it has no guarantee that women who profess to be thoroughly trained are what they assume to be, and legislation giving this guarantee cannot be long delayed. There is no doubt that the House of Commons is in favour of such legislation, and that if the Nurses' Registration Bill secured time for a second reading that it would have as favourable a reception as it had in the House of Lords in 1908."

Everyone not hopelessly ignorant of the history of the Nurses' Registration movement knows that the Nurses' Bill passed through the House of Lords in that year, without a division at any stage. This

can hardly be construed by the most ardent anti-registrationist into "having failed to overcome the opposition in the Houses of Parliament."

In connection with the adoption of the resolution proposed at the meeting, the President said (I again quote the official report), "The only people who were listened to were those who were pertinacious. Nurses had waited in patience for long, but their patience was becoming exhausted. They must have public meetings and plain speaking, and bring their opponents to the bar of public opinion, as they had already brought them before the Select Committee of the House of Commons, and the House of Lords."

Lastly, you comment on the financial aspect as not re-assuring, but fail to mention a balance of £45 16s. 11d., and the fact that a very large number of members paid a life subscription on joining the Society, and that £25 given in donations by members during the past year, in addition to annual subscriptions, proved their continued interest in the work of the Society.

But the President remarked that she had some sympathy with those nurses who had failed to pay their Annual Subscriptions; that nurses in this country had been paying for a national reform for so many years, and that it must be remembered their opponents were rich men, but they did not put their hands into their own pockets to finance this industrial battle. The Central Hospital Council for London, which was the active opponent of Nurses' Registration, had taken power to defray its expenses by annual contributions from the constituent hospitals. That was to say, out of money subscribed by the charitable public for the relief of the sick poor.

On any future occasion that a reporter is sent to our meetings, I hope that it will be someone not so manifestly animated by anti-registration animus as to be unable to supply you with a correct account of the proceedings.

I am, Madam,

Yours faithfully,

MARGARET BREAY.

Hon. Secretary,

Society for the State Registration
of Trained Nurses.

The attempt to convey to nurses that the Registration movement causes its supporters anxiety is useless. Never has the nurses' cause been in so safe and satisfactory a condition. Associations of medical practitioners and trained nurses, 30,000 strong, have the Nurses' Registration Bill in hand, and at the right moment mean to press it forward with irresistible determination. That numbers of human beings—men as well as women—are apathetic in giving personal service to matters of social and educational reform none can deny, but the energy of the few is for ever providing the driving force necessary for the elevation of that mass. The Act for the State Registration of Trained Nurses is quite certain at an early date of a place

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