

A REGISTRATION "AT HOME."

By invitation of Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson a number of Matrons and Members of Parliament met to discuss the question of State Registration of Trained Nurses at 46, Cadogan Square, S.W., on the afternoon of Friday, June 21st. A most hospitable tea was served in the dining-room, after which the meeting was held in the beautiful drawing-room, bright with orange poppies and mauve iris.

Lady Helen introduced the speakers, pointing out how very important it was to the public that their nurses should be skilful and trustworthy. The subject was of special importance just now, when Insurance Committees had the power to subsidize nurses, as for some occult reason partially trained women were not unfrequently considered fitting for the poor.

Miss E. M. MUSSON.

The first speaker was Miss E. M. Musson, Matron of the General Hospital, Birmingham, who spoke on the educational side of the Registration question. She pointed out that a nurse is not always to be blamed for her shortcomings; often the fault lies with the manner of her training. Every hospital establishes a training school for nurses; it is the cheapest, and at the present the only way of getting the work done. The real recompense for her arduous work is supposed to be the teaching and training she will receive during the term of her contract, and the certificate which will be awarded at its termination.

Hospital Committees are now usually alive to the necessity of boarding and lodging their nurses respectably, though not too liberally always, but with regard to the teaching their part of the contract is often quite ignored. Some arrange for regular teaching by properly qualified Matrons and Sisters and members of the medical staff; in others the committee take no steps to insure that the pupils receive any instruction, and it is greatly to the credit of the medical profession that in many hospitals lectures are given voluntarily by members of the medical staff. Miss Musson quoted a remark of Dr. Rendle Harris to medical students at Birmingham University as applicable to the education of nurses: "The real fault that needs to be remedied is the lack of standard of comparison between an increasing crowd of diverse institutions ostensibly engaged in turning out the same product," and again, "The examination system, though much abused, is of incredible value—it detects the good teacher as surely as it detects the good scholar." Hospital Committees, lecturers, Matrons and Sisters would all be more interested in teaching their nurses were there a definite standard to which they must attain, as the nursing of the hospital must depend upon the success of their nursing school.

MISS SIDNEY BROWNE, R.R.C.

Miss Sidney Browne claimed that the measures which the Government considers to be necessary for the protection of its own servants should also be considered necessary for the general public. For years it has been laid down by an Army Order (A.O. 1st April, 1897) that no nurse can join the Army unless she has had three years' training and service in a hospital or large infirmary. If part of this time is spent in private nursing she is not eligible. This hospital or infirmary must be a Training School approved by the Nursing Board or the Territorial Force Nursing Service Advisory Council. This rule applies to all nurses serving under the Government, and forms a kind of legal Registration Act for the Services.

Hundreds of certificated nurses who apply are not qualified, or considered fit to nurse our soldiers. These unqualified nurses generally drift into various nursing institutions who take what nurses they can obtain for small salaries and charge high fees for their services.

If any Member of Parliament is seriously ill, or any of his family, he sends to an Institution for a nurse . . . no one enquires if she is a properly trained nurse or not; there is no way of knowing except by making her produce her certificate, which is never done, and if it were done it would be impossible for anyone not an expert to gauge the worth of the certificate. Thus a Member of Parliament might easily put his life or the lives of those dear to him into the hands of a nurse who had been rejected as unfit to nurse our soldiers.

There is, said Miss Browne, no law preventing a nurse calling herself a trained nurse when she is not trained, and there is no law preventing any hospital or Union Infirmary giving a nurse a certificate certifying that she is a trained nurse when in no sense of the word has she been properly trained.

Miss Browne then gave some concrete instances, and concluded by saying that it requires at least three years before a nurse becomes efficient, and it is really much more important that a proper standard of training and education should be legally recognised for nurses than it is for any other class of expert workers, as often it is a matter of life and death to the patient.

MISS BEATRICE KENT.

Miss Beatrice Kent described the arguments for State Registration of Nurses as sound, strong, and sane. She spoke on the economic aspect of the question, and the injustice to thoroughly qualified nurses of competing with women masquerading in a bonnet and cloak; of nurses ill paid and sweated taking to drink and drugs, of others who die in the workhouse or commit suicide; and pleaded for legislative reform.

MISS H. L. PEARSE.

Miss H. L. Pearse, Superintendent of Nurses under the London County Council, spoke of the development and growing importance of the work of nurses under the London County Council, the Infant Life Protection Act; and the Insurance

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)