

THE ABUSE OF NURSES' UNIFORM.

STATE REGISTRATION DEMANDED.

A well attended, enthusiastic and unanimous public meeting was held at 11, Chandos Street, Cavendish Square, on Friday, March 14th, at 8 p.m. Dr. Chapple, M.P., presided and said that it was a privilege as well as a pleasure to occupy the chair. The subject of State Registration of Trained Nurses with which the question before the meeting was connected, was not a party question. He had been interviewing members in the House of Commons in regard to it and found that it had as many supporters on the Opposition as on the Government side.

In matters connected with politics he put the interests of the community first, of sections of society next, and of individuals last. The question of State Registration of Nurses was a question concerning the whole community, and in the community the sick; and no section of the community was so entitled to the thought and consideration of Parliament as the sick, and their protection from deception.

When he saw recently in the *Times* the pathetic story of a gross abuse of nurses' uniform, he put down a question to ask the Prime Minister "whether in view of the frequent instances of the misuse of nurses' uniform he will give facilities for a Nurses' Registration Bill." It was a much longer question than that originally, but was severely censored. In its complete form he further asked:—

"Whether the Prime Minister was aware that there was a large section of members in the House of Commons who, being opposed to the extension of the franchise to women, were extremely anxious to remove the disabilities from which women suffered, and that, in consequence, he would find a large body of supporters from all sections of the House."

Mr. McKenna, who replied for the Prime Minister, said: "Registration of Nurses would not prevent people from dressing as such unless this were made an offence. If a Nurses' Registration Bill is introduced it is a matter for consideration whether registration should carry with it the right to wear some distinctive badge. I cannot make any statement as to facilities being given for such a Bill."

Dr. Chapple said that he then asked as a supplementary question: "Is the Right Hon. Gentleman not aware that where Nurses' Registration is in operation a badge is supplied which is worn as part of the uniform? Can he say whether there could be any motive for wearing nurses' uniform except the motive of deception?"

Mr. McKenna replied: "I should like to have notice of the last part of the question" (which, said Dr. Chapple, he shall have). "With regard to the first part I agree that it is a matter which should be considered?"

He believed there was a growing feeling amongst a large section of the House of Commons that

the time was opportune to press the question home. (applause).

Dr. Chapple then asked Mrs. Fenwick to move the Resolution.

Before proposing the Resolution, Mrs. Fenwick reported that she had received many letters from friends supporting the demand for the meeting, and regretting their inability to be present. Miss Musson, Matron of the General Hospital, Birmingham, always in the forefront of every movement for the benefit of the profession, had addressed the following letter to the Chair:—

"I regret that I am unable to be present at the meeting on March 14th. For many years our dress was looked upon as sacred to the nursing profession, and it is because it conveys to the eye of the general public a suggestion of training and professional responsibility, that it has been adopted not only by untrained nursemaids, general servants, and canvassers for drug firms, &c., but also by disreputable and immoral persons. It is adopted by them with intent to deceive.

"Drunken and immoral women appear in the dock attired in our once honoured garb, and are even described as 'Nurse,' and no protest is made. On the contrary, the reporters frequently use the title to make a telling headline in the newspapers. In only a very small percentage of cases has the delinquent any connection whatever with the nursing profession.

"In view of the enormous work which trained nurses have done and are doing for the community, we think it is quite time that Parliament should grant us what we have long desired, *i.e.*, a recognised legal status, with power to protect our honourable profession from discredit brought on it, either by unworthy members, or by those who usurp its distinctive dress and title.

"The registration of trained nurses by the State would, we believe, raise the standard of our profession as a whole, and would result in better nursing being provided for the sick, especially the sick poor."

Mrs. Fenwick then quoted from a letter from Miss Huxley, of Dublin, President-elect of the Irish Nurses' Association:—"One hears a great deal of the misuse of nurses' uniform, and a protest is surely necessary. . . . The right to wear it comes as a result of years of hard work and self-denial, and it is intolerable that all sorts and conditions of women should be allowed to wear the distinctive garb of our profession."

Lady Hermione Blackwood, President of the Ulster Branch of the I.N.A., wrote:—"I regret I shall not be in England to attend the meeting to protest against the misuse of nurses' uniform. It is high time that strong measures should be taken to put down the abuse. I wish it could be made as illegal for an unqualified person to appear in nurses' outdoor uniform as it is for a civilian to masquerade in soldiers' uniform. We are having the annual meeting of the Ulster Branch of the Irish Nurses' Association this afternoon, and a resolution of protest on this question will be

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