

attention to the fact that so lately as April 19th of this year, the Chairman of the Hospitals Committee of the Metropolitan Asylums Board admitted that owing to a shortage of nurses, they had been compelled to refuse patients suffering from measles and whooping cough. He further stated that this shortage was not due to the fact that the Board paid low salaries as this was not the case, but that it prevailed not even in London alone, but throughout the whole country. He added that advertisements for nurses at an increased salary has been issued, but no applications had been received. A similar shortage of suitable candidates to fill vacancies is reported from the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute, from Provincial Hospitals and Infirmarys, and even in some of our large London training schools.

The Bill for the State Registration of Nurses is primarily an educational one.

We ask that the State shall ensure that the professional education we receive shall be thorough and complete, knowing that our subsequent ability to perform our responsible work efficiently will depend upon such thoroughness.

We desire, therefore, that nursing education should be systematised, through the recognition by the central governing body to be created under a Nurses' Registration Act, of such Nursing Schools as can provide facilities for an adequate training, and by the affiliation of others, affording partial though valuable opportunities, which do not at present receive the appreciation to which they are entitled.

We desire, further, the power to maintain discipline in our own ranks, such as is exercised in the case of the medical profession by the General Medical Council, and of midwives by the Central Midwives' Board.

And lastly, we plead that trained nurses in the United Kingdom, who have proved themselves competent, shall be recognised by the State; and that they shall have the right to use a title which will distinguish them in the public mind from unskilled persons assuming to be skilled, and from those who adopt their professional uniforms with the object of deceiving the public to their detriment and danger.

We place our case before you, Sir, confident that our claims will not be denied your consideration, and respectfully urging upon you that legislation in the interests of the great profession of nursing shall no longer be delayed.

We ask this for the benefit and advantage alike of the public whom we serve, and of the medical profession of whose work ours forms an integral part.

We ask it also in our own name, for we venture to think that we have earned the right to ask Parliament to give us this public recognition which has been accorded to other professions, and, which, if granted, must increase our powers of usefulness, and, therefore, of public service.

LADY HELEN MUNRO FERGUSON SPEAKS ON
BEHALF OF THE PUBLIC.

LADY HELEN MUNRO FERGUSON: Mr. Asquith, I have been asked to take part in this Deputation because the question of State Registration of Nurses is not one which affects nurses and doctors only, but is one in which the public is vitally interested, though it is natural that doctors and nurses should take a prominent part in promoting it, because they best realise the dangers to which the public are subjected from the lack of such registration. It was Florence Nightingale who started the campaign against the Gamp, and we believe that the battle will not be wholly won until Registration of Nurses by the State is in force. At present the public have no guarantee that they will get nurses suitable to their necessity. There is no standard; and in the absence of a standard and of experts to define what is the necessary training for a nurse, it is open to every hospital of 10 beds or 100, which professes to provide nurses for the public, to state that its nurses are trained, and it is no safeguard to pay £2 2s. a week for a private nurse, or £13 13s. in a nursing home.

Those who are opposed to registration of nurses say that the public have only to make enquiries, but nurses are wanted in emergencies, in cases of critical illness or accident, and there is no time to make minute enquiries.

Again, according to our opponents, moral qualities are of more importance than knowledge and training. These views are generally put forward by persons in rude health; those subjected to the ministrations of a nurse would probably regard skill of importance equal to those moral qualities which are so praiseworthy. Unquestionably the great majority of people do not understand what is required in a trained nurse, and consider a person in uniform all that is necessary.

It was brought to the notice of the Select Committee on the Registration of Nurses in 1905 that an Association of Nurses for the poor stated that their nurses were trained for three months "in a knowledge of the Bible and the Prayer Book, in singing and speaking at meetings, and in nursing." Since that time I believe the statement has been omitted from their annual report, and I hope that the order of accomplishments, has been transposed. All over the country district committees are busy providing nurses for the sick poor, and having no standards to guide them, many apparently agree with the noble Lord, who, when the Nurses' Registration Bill was before the Upper House, referred to the different classes of nurses as "those who attend the well-to-do and people who have important operations performed by eminent surgeons," and "that type of nurse especially required for the ordinary ailments of the poor." These committees are quite pleased for such nurses to do the family washing and feed the family pig, not realising that the very fact of the nurse undertaking these

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