

clinical material available should be utilised in the best possible manner. There must be waste neither of time nor opportunity, as it was difficult even in the prescribed three years' course of training to assimilate all that a woman should know if she were to be a safe and skilful attendant on the sick. She claimed that every trained nurse who was worthy of her high vocation desired that its honour should be protected, that true artist and fine craftswoman as she was, she abhorred superficial standards and inferior work, and emphatically condemned jerry-built nursing.

Registrationists claimed that these desirable ends were to be attained by the introduction of order and system into nursing education as a whole, and that this was only possible through a Central State Authority empowered by Act of Parliament to define a minimum standard of Nursing Education to which all training schools for Nurses general and special must attain, so that all hospitals professing to train nurses should be required to give evidence that they possessed the clinical material, the teaching faculty, qualifying them to be schools in fact as well as in name, so that pupils who were prepared to give years of hard work to honestly qualify themselves for their profession should know, with certainty, that the education they were receiving was adequate.

The chaos at present existing in nursing education was due to the fact that the quality of professional education in hospitals was left to the absolute discretion of lay committees, and that neither educational interests nor women's economic interests were, as a rule, represented upon them.

She claimed that order and system were imperative to the efficiency of trained nurses, and therefore of the safety of the sick whom they served, and to obtain them an authority must be created which should define, supervise, and co-ordinate the education in the various nurse-training schools, and that this could be best achieved by the passage of a Nurses' Registration Act to regulate the qualifications of trained nurses and to provide for their registration. Under this Act a General Nursing Council would be established which would regulate the conditions of admission to the Register of Nurses, and approve those hospitals and infirmaries which could show that alone, or in conjunction with others, they could provide the necessary instruction.

Mrs. Fenwick showed that while there was a strong case for the organisation of nursing from the educational side, equally strong arguments could be advanced from the economic side, and now that human and industrial evolution impelled or compelled women to be self-supporting economic regulation was absolutely necessary. She showed that the skilled professional worker had a right to legal status so that the quality of her work should have a just market value, and that without this status she competed in the open market with the unskilled worker, and thus her professional

standards were depreciated in the public estimation, as well as her just rewards. She showed further that doctors, dentists, chemists and midwives all had a legal status, carrying with it a certain amount of protection by the State, and asked why in this chain of health workers was the trained nurse alone to remain without the Pale.

Mrs. Fenwick claimed that well-trained nurses who were anxious to give the public a guarantee of their quality through a State Register had for a quarter of a century worked tenaciously for this end, and had behind them a weight of Parliamentary, professional and public opinion which no Government had a right to ignore.

She stated that the Nurses' Registration Bill had been prepared on instructions from the Central Committee for the State Registration of Nurses, and mentioned the important societies represented upon it by delegation. She explained that on the General Council for the Registration of Nurses in the United Kingdom which it was proposed to establish, provision was made for direct representation of the nursing profession and that amongst the most important duties and powers of the Council were the standardisation of training, and the examination and registration of nurses, and then discussed in detail the principal clauses of the Bill, the difficulty of securing its discussion in the House of Commons, and its effect as a Health Act and in other directions.

MRS. STRONG SECONDS THE RESOLUTION.

Mrs. Strong (President of the Scottish Nurses' Association), who said she had much pleasure in seconding the resolution, said that Mrs. Bedford Fenwick had given a complete outline of the work done to secure legal status for nurses during the past twenty-five years. The education of a nurse appeared to be a matter of indifference to most people; nurses themselves were far from being unanimous in desiring a definitely fixed curriculum, to give them some kind of a common standard. Every other profession had a definite status, certain common diplomas required signifying that the individual members had passed through a course of instruction to fit them for that particular calling, and were thereby to a certain extent protected from unfair competition. Not so with a nurse; she had no defined position, there was no standard, no common diploma, anyone could wear a nurse's uniform, get a few testimonials, and compete with a woman who has spent time and money in acquiring the knowledge and experience to fit her for the true office of nursing.

There was no wish to exclude the so called useful woman, who might have spent a few months or weeks in a hospital, and called herself a nurse (if the public wished to employ her), but she should be compelled to use the word "unqualified" and to go about in ordinary dress, and not the garb of a nurse. It was not only the qualification of a nurse which needed definition, but the uniform, which should be as distinct as a soldier's, with a penalty for any infringement of its use. All knew the sad uses for which a nurse's

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)