

NURSES' REGISTRATION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

MAJORITY FOR BILL, 229.

In our last issue we reported that the Nurses' Registration Bill was to be introduced by Dr. Chapple into the House of Commons on Wednesday in last week. As we went to press, it was thought wiser, with the consent of the Speaker, to introduce the Bill under the ten minutes' rule on Tuesday in this week. Consequently Tuesday afternoon found several friends of the nurses' cause in the House of Commons, and the Editor of this JOURNAL (much as she resents it) a prisoner behind the grille in the ladies' gallery.

FROM BEHIND THE GRILLE.

Peeping through the gilded bars the House was seen to be thronged—both front Benches crammed. Historic business was on the tapis. We listened to the Prime Minister, in reply to Mr. Bonar Law, state in dulcet tones that he would state his proposals next Monday on the second reading of the Home Rule Bill. Then came fiercely triumphant cheers, and Mr. Currie, Unionist, came to take his seat—so long occupied by our very good friend Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson.

Then near upon four o'clock Dr. Chapple arose to ask leave to introduce the Nurses' Registration Bill, and did so in a short speech which we publish in full from the official report of the Parliamentary Debates.

Mr. Handel Booth opposed the Bill; he said he should go to a division. This statement seemed almost too good to be true. Such tactics would do for us what we had been striving to do for more than ten years, and what our opposers had prevented by every means in their power. That is, test the opinion of the House of Commons on this important national question.

After the speeches, bells tinkled, and sonorous voices shouted "Division" throughout the House. Members streamed into the House. For a few minutes our fate hung in the balance. Would these men with absolute power over our conditions of life file to the right or to the left? Would they pass up the steps into the Aye Lobby, or into the No Lobby?

One's heart for a moment stood still, and then galloped on full of hope as they were seen to turn in great numbers to the left, and only a few to the right. We watched them from our eyrie with thankfulness and joy.

Then a few more minutes passed, and two figures were seen side by side coming up to the floor of the House—our champion full of spring,

our opposer walking delicately. Arrived at the table, Dr. Chapple read out the result of the ballot:—

For leave to bring in the Bill ...	311
Against	82

Majority for 229

That was a living moment.

Then the Bill was ordered to be brought in by Dr. Chapple, Dr. Addison, Mr. Alden, Mr. Bryce, Mr. Duncan Millar, Mr. Scott Dickson, Mr. Remnant, Viscount Wolmer, Sir George Younger, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, and Mr. Field. It was presented by Dr. Chapple accordingly, and read a first time with cheers. To be read a second time upon Friday, the 13th of March.

NURSES' REGISTRATION.

Dr. Chapple: I beg leave to move,

"That leave be given to introduce a Bill to regulate the qualifications of trained nurses, and to provide for their registration."

This Bill, without compulsion, without cost to the State, without the creation of new State officials, sets up a nursing council. That nursing council is charged with the duty of prescribing a curriculum, of prescribing also a minimum standard of training, of prescribing that certificates shall be granted to those nurses who pass examinations prescribed by this council, and it provides also that a register of nurses who have passed the prescribed examination, and secured certificates, shall be kept for reference. It does not in the least interfere with nursing even as carried on at present. If this Bill becomes law any woman would be at liberty to practise nursing just as she practises it now; she could go to cases to which she is called whether she is trained or not, whether she is an impostor or not, and she could charge any fee she desires. The only thing she will not be able to do if she has not these qualifications is to claim that she has been trained at a hospital and is a qualified nurse. It is on all fours with the registration of medical men. Any man can practise as a doctor whether trained or not, but if he is not trained he cannot claim to have been trained as a medical man, to have gone through the ordinary curriculum, and to have secured a degree and registration. All we want to do is to place the nurses in the same category as the doctors in relation to a recognised register.

The present state of the nursing profession is quite unsatisfactory; there is a great scarcity of nurses. Of 200 institutions circularised quite recently ninety-nine declared that they were short of nurses, and a large number also declared that the quality of the women applying to be nurses was much lower than it used to be. Under the present system the sick are imposed upon. Women can wear a uniform, pretend to have gone through a full hospital training and claim the usual fees. This Bill does not prevent even that,

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