

The public at the present time thought of nurses in different ways. Those who had been ill usually remembered them with gratitude, but their friends sometimes regarded them in a different sense.

At the present time poor law institutions were under-nursed, and untrained persons were nursing the sick poor, in spite of the fact that many years ago Florence Nightingale had spoken against the abominable system of supposing that anything would do for the poor.

#### A PUBLIC HEALTH QUESTION.

Had the public supported the movement for State Registration of Nurses twenty years ago, there would not have been the complaints that there are at the present time. The public did not recognize that the question was not only one of advantage to the nursing profession, but primarily one of Public Health. They were not aware that public bodies were entering into contracts for the nursing of school children by untrained persons. The care of the sick poor in country districts was often inadequate. The reason why the poor were treated in this way—it was always the poor who suffered—was that although their nursing was organized by philanthropic persons there was not sufficient charity to provide adequate salaries. Yet a nurse in a country district had double the responsibility of one in hospital.

The question of shortage of nurses also acutely affected the fever hospitals. The public, if they knew, would not tolerate children with infectious fevers being left at home because the hospitals could not take them in on account of the shortage of nurses.

From the public health point of view, the development of nursing for the whole nation was needed. Nursing was now considered a sort of luxury, but what was wanted from the medical standpoint was that good nursing should be available for every one who was ill, including insured persons when ill in their own homes. Many nurses would be needed if that were carried out.

What was the actual position? Of the numerous Nurses' Registration Bills proposed from time to time, the present one was a concentrated example. Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson had had charge of the Bill for years, and it was now in the able hands of Dr. Chapple.

In connection with a resolution which he submitted to the meeting, Sir Victor Horsley hoped the vote would be almost unanimous. That would demolish the erroneous statement made by Mr. Asquith recently—who seemed personally sympathetic—that there was a division of opinion on the subject. There was a small minority against it. There always was in regard to any measure; but no one had a right to say that those in favour of Nurses' Registration were not agreed.

We must, therefore, convert some one at the head of affairs. He suggested that the first

convert to be made was Mr. McKenna, under whose department this legislation would come, and who had stated that he was not in favour of the proposed Bill because there were difficulties. He further said he had no knowledge of the evils arising from lack of registration, whereas there were pages of examples in the blue books in his own office.

The speaker concluded by asking for the following resolution the whole hearted support of every one interested in social progress. The registration movement was part of the great movement for the enfranchisement of women, giving to those who worked the responsible acknowledgment of their services to the State.

#### RESOLUTION.

"That in view of the grave injury at present caused to Public Health, and to Nursing, by the absence of a Statutory Register of Qualified Nurses, this Conference calls upon the Government to accept the Bill for the State Registration of Nurses introduced into the House of Commons by Dr. Chapple, and the first reading of which has been carried by a very large majority."

After the Resolution had been seconded the Chairman invited discussion of the question.

Lord Knutsford, Chairman of the London Hospital, who was the first speaker, said he was not well enough to make the speech he would like to make, having only recently recovered from an illness, but the subject was very near to his heart, and with the permission of the meeting he would read a list of objections to the scheme signed by 234 Matrons and others interested in nursing. Sir Victor Horsley hoped that they would all be unanimous. Nothing would give him (Lord Knutsford) greater pleasure. He wished he could meet Sir Victor and others and discuss the question with them, so that they need not go on with these constant dissensions. There surely must be some point on which they could meet on common ground.

Lord Knutsford then read the document referred to, and subsequently criticised the constitution of the Nursing Council defined in the Nurses Registration Bill.

#### AN OBSOLETE DOCUMENT.

An inquiry by Miss E. E. Fowler as to when the list of names was obtained elicited the reply that it was about ten years ago.

Dr. E. W. Goodall demolished the time-worn argument that you "cannot register character." The Bill did not propose to register character, neither was it registered under the Medical Acts. The same argument was advanced in relation to the registration of medical practitioners, and was debated fifty or sixty years ago. What would be registered under the Nurses Registration Act would be the qualification of the nurse. He advised all present to read the argument as to the registration of character advanced by Sir James Paget, quoted in his life.

Other speakers having voiced their views, Sir Victor Horsley replied, beginning by congratulating Lord Knutsford on his recovery; and remarking

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