

Musson then introduced as the first speaker, Mr. Gilbert Barling, F.R.C.S., Vice Chancellor of the University of Birmingham, and Senior Surgeon to the General Hospital.

THE STATE REGISTRATION OF TRAINED NURSES.

THE HALL MARK OF COMPETENCE.

Mr. Barling, who on rising to speak was warmly acclaimed, said that the chief justification for a movement of this kind was that it was for the advantage of the public; if it did not satisfy that criterion, then the movement for State Registration of Nurses deserved to fail. He hoped to show that in addition to being advantageous to the public weal, it was also in the interests of the nursing profession.

He pointed out that at the present time any woman might call herself a trained nurse whether she had training or not, whether the training had been adequate or inadequate, whether she was a woman of good conduct or unfit to intrude into a sick room. That the large majority of nurses were adequately trained, and of admirable character, he had no doubt, but there was a sufficient minority who had not these qualities against whom the public, and, equally with the public, the real nurse, needed protection. When once State Registration had been adopted the public would realize that a nurse on the Register had been properly prepared for her work, and that they had a test which they could apply by asking if any woman they engaged was registered. At present when private persons needed a nurse they had to accept, without any means of discriminating, whoever might be sent. They could not, as in the case of doctors, dentists or midwives, assume that the nurse had spent adequate time in training, that she had had adequate experience in the nursing of varied forms of illness, that she had been taught a modicum of the scientific knowledge on which her work was based, nor that the test of examination had been applied to show that she had availed herself of the teaching, and the practical experience placed before her. In the case of the doctor or dentist, he did not pretend that State Registration had no weaknesses or loop holes, but, on the whole, it did secure to the public a fairly adequate training, and test by examination, before members of either the medical or dental professions were let loose upon the public. If this were so it was difficult to see why State Registration should not be equally helpful in the nursing sphere of work.

The Vice-Chancellor then disposed of the arguments used against the thorough training and examination of nurses. As to nurses so prepared, assuming the function of the medical practitioner, he believed that a nurse who had satisfied the requirements of a Council of Registration was far less liable to commit the indiscretion of going outside her proper functions than was a half educated, and partly undisciplined,

woman, undertaking the responsibility of nursing the sick.

As to women who were temperamentally unsuited, they, at all events, would not be *dangerous*, because they would not be ignorant. At the same time it would be the duty of Matrons in the future, as now, to discourage such unsuitable candidates from becoming nurses.

With the nurse, as with the doctor, the work of Pasteur and Lister, and all that had followed from it, had added enormously to the responsibilities of the duties to be discharged, a responsibility which could only be adequately met if there was sufficient scientific teaching, a sufficient period of practical training, and a reasonable test by examination. The State alone had the power to exact these necessary things, and at the same time to secure some uniformity of standard below which no one should be placed on the Register.

Some opponents of the movement conceded the necessity for training, but wished to avoid standardisation; they argued that it was sufficient for a hospital to adopt its own standard, and that all nurses for the public should be supplied by hospitals, and be under the control of the Matron. He offered three objections to this: (1) that without standardisation incompletely trained nurses might be sent out to the public; (2) that nurses sent out by hospitals were in some cases used as sources of income to the hospital they were connected with, instead of themselves benefiting by the income they earned; and (3) that the constant return to institutional life was one of the deterrents which prevented some women from taking up nursing as their life's work.

The argument that the advocates of State Registration had forgotten the importance of character was characterised by the Vice-Chancellor as absurd. The responsibility of the Matron, when Registration was adopted, would remain exactly what it was now.

Discussing the Bill, Mr. Barling said it seemed a very reasonable measure, and likely to attain the end aimed at without doing injustice to anyone. The one thing it laid down was that no one should be entitled to use the name Registered Nurse unless his or her name was on the Register. It did not prevent anyone using the title of nurse, or any neighbourly kindnesses which people were apt to shew each other in sickness. It was intended only that the title Registered Nurse should be the Hall Mark of Competence.

THE STATUS OF THE TRAINED NURSE.

Miss G. A. Rogers, late Matron of the Royal Infirmary, Leicester, who spoke after some thirty-five years of hospital life, at home and abroad, said that State Registration was needed (1) to improve the education of nurses; (2) to improve the status of the trained nurse. The nursing profession desired that the question of the education of nurses should be treated seriously, scientifically; that a definite curriculum and a

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