

The medical profession realise the great advantage which has accrued to themselves and to the public from a system of State Registration, and they desire that nurses and consequently the public should benefit in the same way.

From the inside knowledge which the medical profession has of the training of nurses, I am able to say that the position is becoming acute. The large hospitals have not yet begun to feel the pinch of the shortage, which exists, of eligible candidates, but in the smaller and special hospitals it is getting most serious, both as to quality and quantity. I am not one who would bar anyone from entering the nursing profession provided that her education enabled her to benefit from the training she receives; but I say from personal knowledge that the quality of applicants is falling off sadly. Many of them are the class of persons who have not had sufficient preliminary education to enable them to benefit by training. It is impossible to teach them, because they are not up to it. It is lamentable. It is that of which the British Medical Association is specially concerned and apprehensive, and last week it unanimously re-affirmed by resolution the opinion of the Representative Body that the State Registration of Nurses is desirable, and passed another extremely important resolution emphasising its concern at the increasing number of insufficiently trained nurses, and calling upon the Government to take steps to remedy this evil.

I have said enough to show that the medical profession is as unanimous as it is possible to be as to the necessity for State Registration of Nurses, and sincerely hopes that the Government will, at no distant time, give facilities for the second reading of the Nurses' Registration Bill.

#### MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK: THE NURSING PROFESSION.

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick said:

SIR,—As the President of the National Council of Trained Nurses of Great Britain and Ireland, representing over 6,000 trained and certificated nurses, I have the honour to place before you some of the reasons why trained nurses desire the passing of a Nurses' Registration Bill by Parliament, a measure which is becoming increasingly urgent, as year by year the demands made on trained nurses increase, as new fields of work open on every side, and at the same time the lack of any status for the thoroughly trained nurse, and the dishonour brought on her calling by those to whom even the extremity of the sick and dying is only regarded as an opportunity for exploitation, is having the effect of causing many eligible candidates to eliminate nursing from the list of occupations when deciding upon a career, and on all sides we hear not only of a shortage in quantity, but of a deterioration in the quality of applicants for training, while the increasing demands of medical and surgical science make a higher degree of intelligence imperative in the trained nurse of to-day.

It is therefore evident that to fulfil the obliga-

tions imposed upon it, the nursing profession should be recruited from the ranks of women of the highest type, of good education, broad sympathies, capable of assimilating the special knowledge, and of acquiring the technical skill, which will fit them for their high vocation. We must bear in mind that it is from the nurses of to-day that the future Superintendents of Nursing must be selected.

It is imperative to get the finest type of women to train, and yet we find that after years of study and experience, nurses pass out of hospital into the various branches of their profession, to find themselves in keen competition with semi-trained and unreliable persons, who, in many instances, have been found totally unsuited for even supervised work in hospital.

Intelligent, well-educated women are awakening to the injustice, after conscientiously preparing themselves for their responsible work, of being classed with unskilled workers, and, worse still, with women of disreputable character.

We nurses, therefore, ask that the term "trained (or registered) nurse" shall have a definite meaning; that anyone using it shall have passed through a carefully supervised term of training and submit to an independent examination; and shall satisfy a Nursing Council appointed under the authority of the State that he or she possesses the qualifications necessary to render him or her a safe attendant on the sick; and that the names of all those who attain the prescribed standard shall be entered on a Nursing Register, so that the public may be enabled easily to distinguish registered from unregistered nurses.

The movement to obtain Registration of Nurses by the State, which was initiated in this country 27 years ago, is primarily an educational one. The object is to ensure that the community shall have a guarantee that the trained nurses they employ are skilled in their professional duties.

At the present time such a guarantee is non-existent. No standard of knowledge for professional nurses has been defined or enforced. Each hospital gives its own certificate after a variable term of training, of instruction, of experience, and the public have no means of discriminating between the value of a certificate given after a few months' experience in a special hospital of a few beds, or after three years' training in a well-organised nursing school in a large general hospital. Such conditions are unjust not only to the public, but to nurses themselves, as those who have qualified thoroughly for their responsible duties find themselves, when trained, on exactly the same footing as those who have not done so.

The sphere of the nurse now embraces much more than the care of the sick. The more far-reaching and effective work of the prevention of sickness is her constant care; in the schools, in the homes of the poor, in factories, in schools for mothers, and now in connection with the insured sick, her opportunities for work which will appreciably raise the standard of the national health are practically unlimited.

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