

only be fully realized by close study of her life, and of her own writings. Perhaps here we may make the criticism that the pivotal principle on which her nursing revolution was based, namely, the necessity of taking out of men's hands the authority to control women, and placing this authority in women's hands, has not been as clearly emphasized in the 'Life' as its importance demands. I rather think that this, then boldly radical belief, on which all her thoroughgoing, training school system was founded, is more fully dwelt upon, and by quotations more clearly illustrated, in the 'History of Nursing.' Her declarations on this point are all the stronger because we now, in the full light of the biography, perceive that though in her early years a conscious emancipator of women, Miss Nightingale was not at all a *féministe* in the strict sense. It was because of the *work* that she defined the division of authority, not because of any special belief in women as such.

"Miss Nightingale seems really to have been indifferent to the 'woman question,' and, in some ways, to have judged women more severely than a historical survey would have quite justified, but here I am wandering off, perhaps, at a tangent.

"There is only one weak part in this admirable biography, and that is its treatment of the 'Nurses' Battle,' as the first struggle over registration was called, between the newly organized Royal British Nurses' Association and the hospital authorities back in the 1880's and subsequent years. But the biographer is not wholly to blame, for we have regretfully to admit that in this contest Miss Nightingale herself was on the wrong side, as the witness of time has testified, and he, being a layman and unacquainted with the world-wide movement for legal safeguards for the basis of nursing education, has faithfully followed her point of view.

"We need only remember that Miss Nightingale was secluded in an invalid's room at the time of that first registration round, to make full explanation of her attitude. No nurse can read the splendid record of her active life, with all its many fearless attacks upon oppressive powers, and not feel certain that, had she been in actual hospital service, she would have been the first to see that, once the young profession had been established, its foundations would have to be protected by law against the encroachments of mercenary hospital directors and commercial institutions. For she was no upholder of *laissez faire*, which she once interpreted as 'let bad alone,' and she was an insistent and unremitting prodger of govern-

ments to protect, administer, and regulate, in questions concerning the public health. All her years after the Crimean War were devoted to the impassioned purpose of advancing the cause of life and health for the Army; for the downtrodden millions of India; the villagers of England, and the crowded workers in cities. She pushed these causes, first, by proclaiming her educational gospel, then by swaying Cabinet Ministers and Parliament to legislating, and all the time by urging, persuading, leading, or driving heads of departments to administer — continually administer. How short-sighted to think she would not have been a believer in legal status for nurses! But her own revolution was too new for her to realize, from her sick-room, that another was called for."

REGISTRATION NEWS.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department, Mr. McKenna, will receive a Deputation from the Central Committee for the State Registration of Trained Nurses' and other supporters of the movement, at the Home Office on Thursday, July 30th, at 12 noon. The Deputation will be introduced by Dr. Chapple, M.P.

THE BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION AND STATE REGISTRATION.

On Friday, July 24th, the Representative Meeting of the British Medical Association in session at Aberdeen, discussed Registration of Nurses, and the great increase of insufficiently trained nurses now posing as such.

Mr. T. W. H. Garstang (Altrincham) moved the adoption of the report of the Medico-Political Committee, together with a recommendation to re-affirm the opinion of the Representative Body that the State registration of nurses is desirable.

The motion was unanimously agreed to.

Dr. E. R. Fothergill, on behalf of the Brighton Division, submitted the following rider to the motion, that it be an instruction to Council to take afresh such steps as it considers desirable in order to obtain:—

(1) Unanimity among the various interests concerned as to the essentials of a Nurses' Registration Bill; (2) satisfactory evidence that there is a large body of professional opinion in support of these essentials; and (3) the support of the Government for legislation next Session on the lines of these essentials.

Dr. Fothergill said they ought to try to obtain what Mr. Asquith wanted, namely, a reasonable amount of unanimity on this question. While doctors were quibbling as to whether a nurse should have two or three years' training, women of ill fame were walking about the streets in nurses' uniform polluting young girls and men.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)