

Miss Kent said :—

I conclude that all or most of those who are present here this afternoon are members of the State Registration Society. I also conclude that we nurses, when we joined that Society, by that act pledged ourselves to support it. To pay our yearly subscription of 1s. and have our names enrolled is merely the outward and visible sign of our membership. The inward and spiritual grace of it is that we enter into a solemn covenant with our consciences to support it. It was a voluntary act, no one pressed us to do it—we did it of our own free will. It is true we took no solemn oath about it, nevertheless, the moral compulsion of our consciences should be binding and impel us to co-operate with those who are working for this reform. This crisis is a grave one, it is no time for wobbling, it is no time for juggling with our consciences; we must throw ourselves whole-heartedly into this battle for the right. In order to do this we must have an intimate knowledge of the subject; we must therefore read and study the book of instruction, the directions for use, the Registration organ, THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING. When we buy any kind of drug from the chemist we are most careful to read the instructions, because it is a remedial medicine. State Registration is the only remedial medicine for the nursing profession, which is very sick. You will never learn nor understand much about this great reform movement unless you study it in this way.

I think at this time of crisis it behoves us to put to ourselves two or three direct questions and see if we cannot answer them satisfactorily.

1. Is State Registration—which is a time-honoured movement and therefore merits some measure of homage—is it right, or is it wrong? We all know that the spirit of freedom is the right spirit. We boast of our free country, our free institutions, our right to free speech, the free press. [At the mention of a free press there was an audible titter.—ED.] It sounds very nice and looks well on paper, but, unfortunately, it is not true. Partial freedom is not freedom, it only emphasises an injustice. However, assuming for the moment that we are, as a nation, sincere, then it follows that we avow automatically—as it were—that State Registration is right, because it stands for the freedom of the profession, and in no other way can it become a free institution—so that question is answered.

2. Is State Registration acceptable to the Professions of Medicine and Nursing? This question ought not to be necessary; a truthful answer to the first covers everything. You have just heard ample proof that it is. We are governed by figures, so let me give you a figure as an additional proof of it. The self-governing Associations of Nurses in England, Scotland and Ireland are analogous in principle to Trades Unions, and we shall none of us deny the importance and the strength of Trade Unionism. These societies of nurses, together with medical societies demanding State Registration, represent something like

40,000 professional people, including more than 500 Matrons. So we answer that in the affirmative.

3. Is State Registration acceptable to the country? I am bold enough to say that we have had practical proof of that also, although the Bill has not yet had facilities for a Second Reading in the House of Commons. The three outstanding events in the history of the movement are enumerated in the first resolution. The Lords and Commons represent the people, and my argument is that if those gentlemen who have shown their sympathy and support in the past are sincere they will, as a matter of course, extend and amplify their practical sympathy by working for us when the Bill comes up for a second reading and get it passed into law.

Those three questions have answered themselves in the affirmative.

Let me for a few moments argue on precedent: that is always a safe thing to do.

I have quite recently spent six months on the American Continent, where I have made a study of nursing conditions. Primarily my purpose was to attend, with another British nurse, the great Nurses' Convention held at San Francisco last June—as Delegate of the National Council of Trained Nurses of Great Britain and Ireland. That event in itself and all that arose out of it was abundant proof of the great educational value of State Registration.

In the fewest possible words I will give you the history of State Registration in the States; we must know it because it is so remarkable and so instructive. Only fourteen years ago did they begin to work for State Registration. I believe the following year the first State got it—New Jersey. Since that time this blessed contagion has spread over the States—East, West and Central—like a forest fire! And now, in 42 States out of the 48, Registration laws are in force.

There has, of course, been some opposition, but the strength and virulence of it cannot be compared with that with which we have to contend. As far as I know, no battle has been longer than five years. Ours has been more than a quarter of a century! This Reform of State Registration for Nurses encircles the world and stops at England which gave it birth! So rapid has been the progress in the nursing profession in the States, since State Registration was established, that it has been raised to university status; and since the year 1907, there has been a Chair of Nursing and Health established at Teachers' College, Columbia University, New York. The occupant of that chair, whom I have the honour of knowing quite well, is Professor Adelaide Nutting, R.N., part author of that monumental work, "A History of Nursing." She has for her assistant, Professor Anna Goodrich, R.N., also a very eminent woman in the profession. Let me quote to you some words uttered by some eminent and experienced American Nurses at the Convention at San Francisco.

One of them says: "The most popular form of legislation pertaining to nurses has been that which provided for the State Registration of

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