

All societies seem to be agreed upon the need for State Registration and the organisation of the nursing profession, and in deciding upon the means to that end it is terribly sad that the way should be obstructed by insinuations and personalities.

Believe me,  
Yours truly,

F. A. SHELDON,  
Lady Superintendent.

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14, St. Thomas's Street, E.C.

[We are pleased to find space for Miss Sheldon's letter, but must claim our right to criticise professional matters, not even excluding the College of Nursing, Ltd., which its promoters appear to consider sacrosanct. The comments which inspired Miss Sheldon's protest were, in our opinion, and in that of the certificated nurse who received the letter, quite justifiable. Three times in one short communication the nurse was advised by her late Matron (a partisan anti-Registrationist) to register "at once" with the College of Nursing Company, and without advising any inquiry into its constitution whatever. Having for years been instructed by this same Matron on the dangers and undesirability of State Registration, and no explanation having been given for the *volte-face*, we agree with the recipient of the letter that it was highly indecorous that certificated nurses should be treated like a flock of sheep.

Miss Sheldon states that "all unions and societies formed by or for nurses are welcome as leading to a better understanding and future for the profession. . . . Societies are, however, impersonal things and it surely is to her hospital that a nurse will turn for advice and guidance."

Why? Surely a body of trained and certificated professional women are endowed with sufficient intelligence to associate together in professional co-operation, and form reliable opinions on their own affairs, without the "guidance" of their employers, as all men and other professional and industrial women do. And nurses not attached to hospitals must be forgiven if their confidence in the omniscience of their Training Schools has been somewhat shaken after the persistent opposition of the committees of the leading hospitals to independent co-operation amongst trained nurses, including the very ruthless antagonism to their justifiable demand for State organization and Registration, a policy which has cost the workers not less than £20,000 during the past quarter of a century. Neither must they be blamed if they doubt the wholesale conversion of the anti-Registration party to the *principles* which must be incorporated in any Act of Parliament calculated to deal justly with trained nurses.

Independent nurses realise that the determination of the Nursing Schools is, as ever, to control the Nursing Profession, and such determination is apparently secured in the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the College Company, in the Registration Bill drafted by it, and through

the autocratic constitution of the Scottish Board. We should be the first to appreciate evidence of a more generous attitude upon the part of those who control the Training Schools towards the profession at large. With regard to improvement in the treatment of nurses by hospital committees during the past twenty years, we welcome it; but we are not oblivious of the fact that before that time their treatment of their nursing staffs was in many instances scandalous. Wretched housing, bad and inadequate food, interminable drudgery and hours on duty, resulting very often in broken health and bitter disappointment. Unless these abuses had been modified a nursing staff could not have been secured or retained, and for these reasons we deprecate the monopoly of power by hospital committees over the entire profession, such a relation between capital and labour is unjustifiable and out of date.

Miss Sheldon says: "In the letter you print the Matron takes it for granted that the nurse has been intelligent enough to read about the College." Where? Presumably in the employers' nursing press, with which she is usually supplied, and through which she is seriously misguided. Personally, we doubt if the matron in question had herself studied the Memorandum and Articles of the College, or she would not have advised a working woman to sign an agreement which contains a clause (3 (J)) providing that "the Council in its discretion" may remove a nurse's name from the Register without appeal! This is not even treating certificated nurses like sheep, but like serfs.

Miss Sheldon's last sentence is unintelligible to us. We make no insinuations. We state bald facts, quoted from the written constitution of the College. There is nothing "terribly sad" in obstructing a company of laymen grasping absolute control of the economic status and personal liberty of thousands of skilled women workers, who have the same right to just social conditions, efficient education and State Registration, as has been secured through the Medical Acts to the Medical profession, and by their own colleagues in the more enlightened parts of the world. It would be "terribly sad" if we British women, for lack of courage, permitted this grave wrong to be done.

Anyway, we initiators of the State Registration movement, who have struggled and paid for the safeguarding of the nursing profession for thirty years, are determined by every means in our power to protect its inalienable rights, freedom of conscience and freedom of contract. We are neither to be bought nor sold.—Ed.]

#### OUR PRIZE COMPETITIONS.

October 28th.—State what you know of the care of patients suffering from a Cerebral Tumour.

November 4th.—What do you know of chorea, its mode of development, the diseases to which it is allied, and the nursing care necessary? [ ] [ ] [ ]

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