

QUESTIONS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

STATE REGISTRATION OF NURSES.

In the House of Commons on Thursday, March 15th, Major Chapple asked the Prime Minister "Whether, in view of the fact that all the great associations representing the nursing profession in the United Kingdom, including the British Medical Association, the Royal British Nurses' Association, the Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland, the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses, the Fever Nurses' Association, the Association for promoting the Registration of Nurses in Scotland, the Scottish Nurses' Association, the Irish Nurses' Association, the National Union of Trained Nurses, and the College of Nursing, Limited, have now announced officially their unqualified support of State Registration, if he will bring in a Bill to effect this purpose?"

Mr. Hayes Fisher, Parliamentary Secretary to the Local Government Board, said: "The Prime Minister has asked me to reply to this question. I am aware that the bodies named have expressed opinions in favour of the State Registration of Nurses, but the information before me does not show that they are in agreement as to the character of the scheme. I cannot at present give any promise of legislation on the subject."

We are quite satisfied with the reply that at present no promise of legislation on the subject of Registration of Nurses can be given, because we have always maintained that during this all-absorbing war it is not the time to legislate for a class of women, thousands of whom are absorbed as they should be, with national duty for our sick and wounded, and therefore unable to consider or discuss the question. We are quite prepared to wait for this great reform until after the war, but we are not altogether satisfied with the implied reason given by Mr. Hayes Fisher, for the Prime Minister, as to why the Government will not bring in a Bill.

Everyone who agrees on the principle of Registration does not agree as to the "character of the scheme." Certainly they do not, and they never will. Until recently the question was sharply supported or opposed. Broadly, the working nurses and liberal-minded Matrons and medical men supported State Registration, and the employers of nurses and their officers opposed it. Now, ignoring the considered opinions and confirmed convictions of the promoters of the reform, a section of the former "antis" are supporting a species of patriarchal registration which, however, admits the principle of the organisation of trained nursing by the State.

These two sections are opposed in one important particular. The independent nurses claim adequate self-government and representation on the Provisional Governing Body of their own profession which will make the Rules and Regulations they have to obey, and the converts to registration still

claim control of trained nurses by the Nursing Schools, through their dependent officials, and deny to certificated nurses the right to representation on the Provisional Governing Body, to be set up by the Act.

The "anti" group now recognises that the pioneers have converted the country to the necessity for State Registration, and although they realise the inevitable, they are quite as determined as ever that the control of educational standards and economic conditions for nurses shall remain in the hands of their employers. Moreover, they now claim disciplinary control of the whole profession *for life*, through control of our Register.

It is quite a simple proposition, to which the poor have been compelled to submit from time immemorial under feudal laws, which have never been modernised so far as hospital government is concerned. But the proposition of absolute control of the workers by their employers is one which all male workers have rightly resisted of late years, and which, in the case of these voters, Parliament has been compelled to adjust in both trades and professions. It does not wait to legislate until both sides are agreed. What is known as maintaining the equilibrium between masters and men is the duty of the State; that is what we pay its administrators to do, and we hope that at a convenient season the Prime Minister or the President of the Local Government Board, who, we have been told, has a Nurses' Registration Bill under consideration, will realise that industrial and professional subjection of the working nurse is as obsolete in Britain as it is now in Russia, and that independent British nurses do not mean to submit to it. In no environment are women more cramped and dominated than by the present system of hospital management. The system is still quite feudal, and we commend to Mr. Hayes Fisher, when time permits, the study of the Nursing question, and the amelioration of present conditions through a just Registration Bill, granting to British nurses the same element of human responsibility recently acquired by the Russian moujik. We have been very patient for many years with the evasions of successive Governments in this connection. Presently it will be time to "toss the bonnet over the border."

Trained nurses owe a great debt of gratitude to Major Chapple, M.P., who, in spite of his arduous medical duties is keeping their interests well before Parliament.

NATIONAL UNION OF TRAINED NURSES.

NEW APPOINTMENTS.

La Panne, Ambulance de l'Océan.—Miss Cancellor.
Urgency Cases Hospital, France.—Miss L. Atkinson (re-appointed).

Red Cross Hospital, Leominster.—Miss Bertram (Sister-in-Charge).

Exeter V.A. Hospital.—Miss S. M. Rogers (Sister).

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