

*Concerning the Register for Nurses:—*

A common Register is objected to because it tends to promote the second and third-rate Nurse at the expense of the best-trained Nurses.

It reduces all to one level, and it is therefore to be avoided by those who have something to lose and nothing to gain by being classed with those of inferior qualifications, or in some cases of doubtful character.

It attracts those of inferior qualifications for obvious reasons.

No Register, as such, can prevent the ignorant and unqualified from calling themselves Nurses, but the Register of an incorporated Association would bestow upon them, at least, the semblance of a right to be accounted Trained Nurses.

No outside body can have the same opportunity of judging of the qualifications of a Nurse, in which individual characteristics must play so important a part, as the Hospital authorities under whom she is trained, and the attempt to do so tends to create confusion in the mind of the public.

A common Register detracts from the advantages of the highly-trained Nurse by placing those with little or no training in the same category, and many ignorant women are thereby placed in a wrong position.

An Association which registers a minimum qualification, and endeavours to stand between the public and the training schools, does not promote progress, but the contrary.

The acknowledged difficulty of distinguishing between real and fictitious Nursing qualifications becomes enhanced and not diminished if all are to be stamped with the same mark.

In these days Trained Nurses are for the most part furnished with evidence of their technical qualifications, which they are always able to produce when required.

If any further inquiry is deemed desirable, what advantage has an Association (which at the best can only furnish second-hand information) over the training school, or last employer, if preferred?

Has the Association any means of following up the subsequent career of a Nurse that are not equally open to the Hospital with which her Nursing has been associated from the first?

Why should it be more difficult for the public to make direct inquiries and to obtain the latest records from the acknowledged authorities, than to seek the information, if it is necessary to seek it at all, indirectly through the intermediary Association?

No public Register can keep a faithful record of those qualifications most important in a Nurse.

It is because the results in practice would be essentially misleading, that the Training Schools oppose a system of wholesale Registration.

Nothing is more fatal to Nursing than the tendency to judge of a Nurse's value by the manner in which she passes examinations. It is a matter of common experience that those who do not come to the fore in this respect, often excel in practical work, and the reverse is frequently noticeable also.

To emphasise the value of theoretical as opposed to practical qualifications, to encourage pseudo-scientific and intellectual attainments at the expense of those moral qualities which *must* be of the *first* importance in Nursing, would be to alter (and in our judgment not to raise) the standard of Trained Nursing hitherto aimed at.

To protect the interest of the best Nurses and to produce as many as possible of the first-rate quality, is obviously the best way to serve the public in this connection. The others may safely be left to find their own level, and the public is becoming increasingly capable of taking care of itself in respect of Trained Nurses, if nothing is done to further mislead or confuse them. The case of Doctors and Midwives is not analogous to that of Nurses, as in the two former instances the technical qualifications rank first in importance, and in Nursing, without deprecating their value, they rank second.

It should be distinctly recognised that the opposition to the scheme of Registration is made in the interest of the best Nurses and of the public, and by those who have done their utmost, with sound practical results, to serve both faithfully for the last twenty years at least.

It is needless to say that no sort of self-interest can be a factor in the opposition by the medical and surgical lecturers in Nurse-training Schools to the scheme in question. Many of us have little time and less inclination to embroil ourselves in a question that places us in a semblance of antagonism to some of our much-esteemed brethren.—I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

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May 7, 1891.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "MEDICAL PRESS & CIRCULAR."

SIR,—In your issue of May 13 there appeared a letter from Dr. A. Ernest Sansom concerning the Royal British Nurses' Association. As none of the eminent medical men connected with the Association have replied to his letter, will you permit a Nurse to do so?

Dr. Sansom plaintively regrets that the Medical Press of this country have so strongly supported the establishment of a Register of Nurses. Most people would have drawn the deduction that the press, with their fingers upon the pulse of the public, and their ears open to professional opinion from all parts of the world, are more qualified to form an accurate judgment upon such a subject than one or two private individuals can possibly be.

If your readers will kindly turn to Dr. A. Ernest Sansom's epistle, on page 495 of your journal, they will observe that after some eulogistic remarks upon his own conduct he is "forced" to the very modest "conclusion" that anyone who differs from himself on the subject of the Registration of Nurses "cannot have adequately considered the situation." He then proceeds to make no less than twenty-four distinct statements, but does not produce one iota of proof in support of any single assertion. And he propounds three conundrums to which he most unkindly vouchsafes no answers. Some of the statements are entirely untrue, and the rest are irrelevant, as I can easily and, withal, briefly show.

The facts are indisputable that hundreds of women are now at work as Nurses who have had no education for the responsible duties with which they are entrusted; and that there are no means of preventing certificated Nurses who prove unworthy of trust, or who have even perhaps been convicted of crime, from continuing their occupation under cover of the certificate which the Hospital that gave it cannot cancel nor recall.

Such a state of affairs is manifestly dangerous to the sick, detrimental to the success of medical treatment, and most discreditable to the profession of Nursing. It might, therefore, be presumed that any attempt to remedy such evils would be welcomed and supported by all honourable men.

The Registration of Trained Nurses is such an attempt. It is being carried on by thirty well-known medical men and Matrons of large London and provincial Hospitals and is strongly supported by many leaders of the medical profession, and by the medical and lay press almost without exception.

The first issue of the Register consists of an alphabetical list of the names and addresses of 1,700 Nurses, and the place and period of Hospital training which each Nurse has received. The credentials, technical and personal, of each Nurse have been carefully scrutinised by the Registration Board, which has power to remove from the list the name of anyone who hereafter proves unworthy of trust. It is therefore utterly untrue to state that the Royal British Nurses' Association registers a minimum qualification, for it registers the place and period of training which a Nurse has passed through at any public Hospital. It is utterly untrue that the Association endeavours to stand between the public and

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