

THE NURSES' REGISTRATION BILL IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

FRIDAY, MARCH 28TH.

MAJOR BARNETT MOVES THE SECOND READING OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE'S BILL.

The Order for the Second Reading of the Nurses' Registration Bill having been read, Major R. W. Barnett, Member for St. Pancras, S.W., moved

"THAT THE BILL BE NOW READ A SECOND TIME."

He continued :

"The Bill which I have the honour to submit to-day for Second Reading is one, the principle of which has already been approved of by this House. So far back as 1905 a Select Committee of the House took evidence in two Sessions on the subject of the State Registration of Nurses, with the result that it was reported,

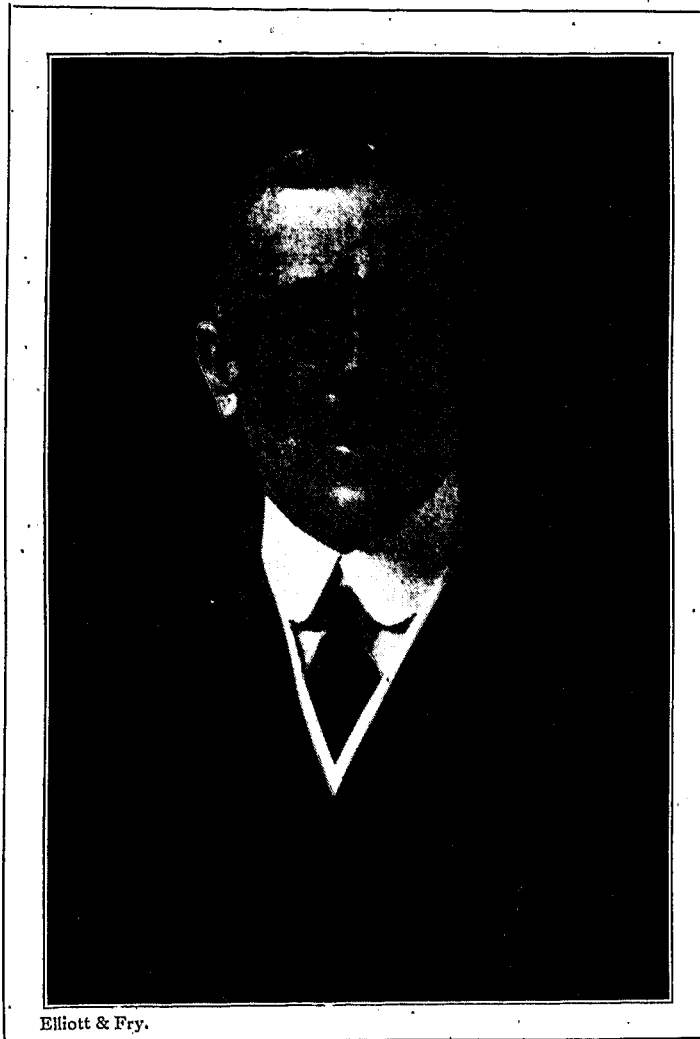
"Your Committee are agreed that it is desirable that a register of nurses should be kept by a central body appointed by the State."

In 1908 a Bill in all its essentials similar to that which is before the House to-day was brought in in another place and passed through all its stages without a Division. In 1914 a similar Bill was introduced into this House under the Ten Minutes' Rule. There was a Division, and by a majority of 228 the House of Commons agreed that the Bill should be read a first time. Then the War intervened, and of course, it was impossible for private Members to get facilities for carrying the Bill further. This is a reform which is very much overdue. (Hear, hear.) At first sight it seems

remarkable that this country, which has been the pioneer in nursing, which is so proud, and so rightly proud of its nurses, and which has recently paid honour to the great name of Florence Nightingale and her devoted band of helpers, should lag behind many of her own Colonies and many other countries in this matter of the State registration of nurses. But so it is. At present there is

State registration in South Africa, not only in Cape Colony, but in Natal, the Transvaal, and the Orange River Colony. In Canada the Provinces of Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia have all got State Registration of nurses. In Australia, Queensland has adopted the principle, and in India the Bombay Presidency. The principle is in force in forty-six of the United States of America. It was in force in the German Empire and Belgium. So far as this country is concerned there is nothing more vague, or undefined in the whole realm of medicine and surgery. Nothing else of such importance, has been left undefined. We know what a medical practitioner is; there is a statutory

definition. We know what a dentist is and what a midwife is; there is a statutory definition in each case. What is a nurse? She may be a modern counterpart either of Florence Nightingale or of Sarah Gamp. There is nothing whatever in our Statute Book to define her position or qualifications, and it is in order to give nursing the dignity of a profession that this Bill is introduced. I ought, perhaps, to say something of the Central Committee which is responsible for drawing up this measure. The Central Committee



Elliott & Fry.

MAJOR R. W. BARNETT, M.P.

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