

THE COLLEGE OF NURSING AND THE STATE REGISTRATION FEE.

The following well-reasoned expression of opinion on the attitude assumed by the Council of the College of Nursing, Ltd., in connection with the registration fees it has taken from some 17,000 nurses appeared in the *Poor Law Officers' Journal* of July 23rd:—

"THE FAIRER WAY."

"The College of Nursing is now apparently convinced of the un wisdom of mortgaging the uncertain prospects of the future. In June of 1916 a prospectus issued by the Council, asking nurses to enrol themselves on its voluntary register, stated that:—

'If you are on the College Register you will automatically and without further fee be placed upon the State Register when the Nurses' Registration Bill is passed.'

This seemed to assume that the Government and Parliament would adopt the Registration Bill framed by the College, or perhaps it should be said, the Bill that the College, with frequent alterations and amendments, endeavoured to prepare. The rejection of this complicated measure was, however, apparent from the first. It has ensured the fate also of the promise contained in the prospectus of 1916. Sir Arthur Stanley (Chairman of the College) has therefore incorporated in the third or July number of the College Bulletin a long letter addressed to the College members and marked 'important,' in which he refers to the attempts made by the College to draft a satisfactory Bill for the State Registration of Nurses and also to the other Bill prepared by the Central Committee for State Registration. But, as he says, 'The Bill which actually did become law was a third Bill introduced by Dr. Addison on behalf of the Government, and in it, no special provision was made for the registration of College members without further fee.' His letter proceeds to say that 'a certain number of nurses, however, when joining the College, may possibly have been under the impression that, whatever Registration Bill became law, they would automatically, without further fee, be placed on the State Register.'

AN ERROR OF JUDGMENT.

"Under the impression' seems a rather mild phrase in view of the published statement that they would 'automatically and without further fee be placed on the State Register' if they came (by payment of a fee) on the College Register. This statement is amended a little by the next paragraph of the letter, which states:—'In the event of you yourself having joined the College before March 18th, 1920, with this belief, the Council is willing to pay such initial fee, not exceeding one guinea, as is payable under the rules of the General Nursing Council when your name has been entered upon the State Register, and upon a receipt of a letter from yourself to the

Secretary of the College stating that you joined the College on the definite understanding that your fee for registration would be paid.' But even this offer places upon the nurses who registered with the College an initiative which, as the original error was that of the College, or its Council, the College ought itself to undertake. The more effective course to follow would be to return the fee accompanied by a letter of regret that it had been accepted on the understanding that it would cover State Registration. The State Register with State Registration under the Act is the one valuable thing to nurses; it supplies the certificate that is of intrinsic worth; it embodies what was sought for by nurses for many years. The case of the immediate return to nurses of the fee paid to the College is apparent in the concluding paragraph of Sir Arthur Stanley's letter. It says:—'The Council are anxious in this matter to do everything that is fair.' As the College is precluded (to put it courteously) from 'automatically' placing its members on the State Register as promised, the Council should automatically put the members in the same position as they occupied before the fee was paid to the College. That would be not more than fair. Yet this final paragraph proceeds:—'The payment of these fees, if demanded by a large number of members, will entail a heavy financial loss to the College. As you are aware, the programme contemplated by the College goes far beyond State Registration, and for its fulfilment requires ample financial resources. The Council, therefore, earnestly hope that those members who can afford to pay the fee for their State Registration will not think it necessary to claim back that amount from the College, but will allow the fee that they have already paid to the College to remain in its funds, to help forward the movement for the improvement of the nurses' status and conditions of work, which, under the auspices of the College, has made such a satisfactory beginning, and which promises such important and far-reaching results.' This may all be true. But would it not have been much more applicable to the situation if such an intimation with regard to the needs of the College had been sent as a covering letter accompanying the return of a fee which had been obtained under, shall we say, a misapprehension? It is one thing to retain a sum so obtained and to plead that retention may be permitted; it is another thing to explain that an error has been made, to rectify it with regret and ask for further confidence. There can be no doubt with regard to which of these is the fairer way."

We hope the Poor Law Matrons on the College Council will take the earliest opportunity, if they have not already done so, to impress upon their fellow members that they cannot be associated with so misleading "a misapprehension" as retaining the guinea fee paid by the nurses for State Registration for the general purposes of the College. In our opinion "misapprehension" is a very merciful manner in which to describe this transaction.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)