

THE STATE REGISTRATION OF NURSES.

THE beginning of the end has come at last. The long battle is nearly over; the long-hoped-for victory is within sight. This mail brings us news from the Cape of Good Hope for which we have been anxiously waiting for many months. The Parliament of the Cape of Good Hope has passed a new Medical Act, which contains certain clauses relating to the Registration of Nurses, and making this system legal and compulsory throughout the whole Colony. These clauses are so important that we must give a full account and explanation of them, next week. But, briefly, it may be said that this Act will ever be memorable in Nursing annals for two reasons. It marks the first occasion upon which any Legislature has given State recognition to the profession of Nursing, and it is the first Parliamentary action in the direction of organising and controlling that profession. It is a striking commentary on this wise and far-sighted policy of the Cape Parliament, that, just at the time it was legislating to protect the sick, and to do justice to Nurses—in other words, to make Registration of Nurses the law of the Colony—the President of the Board of Trade—Sir Michael Hicks-Beach—was yielding to clamour and refusing a petty privilege to a great Association of Nurses, whose sole offence was that it was striving to bring about Registration, in England. At the very time that the whole medical profession in South Africa, and the authorities of every Hospital, except one, were cordially supporting the demand of Members of the Royal British Nurses' Association in the Colony, for legal Registration, a few Hospitals and a few medical men were factiously opposing and utterly misrepresenting the objects and proceedings of the same Association, in the Mother Country.

COMING EVENTS.

IT is well known in professional circles how far in advance of other northern towns Manchester is in Nursing matters. This has lately received a fresh and most significant illustration. The advertisement for a Matron at the Monsall Fever Hospital states that "she must hold a Certificate of three years' training in a General Hospital." We have never previously observed this most wise condition made essential. While giving all credit to the Royal Infirmary, Manchester, for being the first to insist on this modern standard of training being fulfilled by those desirous of occupying the first post in their Nursing Departments, we feel that it shows conclusively the drift of public, as well as professional, opinion. What Manchester does to-day, England will do to-morrow, is an adaptation of an old saying which we imagine will, in this matter, at any rate, prove to be true.

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THE DEFENCELESS SICK.

IT is, unhappily, notorious that many entirely ignorant women, and some who have been convicted of crime, obtain employment in private houses as Trained Nurses, on the strength of Hospital Certificates, which they have forged or stolen. Some do this simply to gain an easy livelihood, but many undoubtedly follow the occupation in order to obtain facilities to appropriate their patients' property. The public has very little conception of the extent to which it is being victimised in this way, because in the confusion and anxiety of dangerous illness, and perhaps impending bereavement, the disappearance of a few valuables is often unnoticed for a time. It is urged by the authorities of a few Hospitals that there is no need for protecting the public against those who thus prey upon them. These Hospitals complacently assert that when a Nurse is engaged, her employers should write to her training school for her character. Putting aside the proverbial absurdity of shutting the stable door when the steed is stolen—of first entrusting a stranger with the care of a patient whose life or death is in the balance, and then inquiring whether or not she is trustworthy and competent for her grave charge—the two following incidents prove the dangerous results which might follow if these Hospitals have their way, and prevent a greatly-needed reform being effected. A Nurse was engaged for a critical case of heart disease, and gave her name, let us say, as Alice Jones. The Doctor was not satisfied, and wrote to the Matron of the Hospital, whose Certificate she produced. In four days' time he received an answer to the effect that Alice Jones was duly certificated on such a date, and was most efficient and of excellent character. With his suspicions naturally lulled, he visited his patient that day, and found she had died quite suddenly—upon being told that her Nurse, and a large quantity of jewellery, had disappeared. A strong complaint to the Hospital was met by its Committee repudiating all control over, or any responsibility for, those who had left their service. A detective was employed, and soon found the real Alice Jones—married, and in a good position—and she proved that she had lost, and advertised for, her Certificate and a number of good testimonials, about six years ago. The false Alice Jones is, we believe, still at large. The other instance is quoted in the last issue of the *Nurses' Journal*. A woman, discharged from five Institutions for dishonesty, finally forged a Certificate of St. George's Hospital, and had the temerity upon it to apply for an appointment as Nurse at the Chelsea Infirmary. She actually gained the post, but was quickly found out, was prosecuted, and sentenced to a month's hard labour. Probably the lesson will not be wasted, and she will, on leaving prison, confine her attention to preying on the sick in private houses. As she has deceived the authorities of five Hospitals, she should have no difficulty in defrauding a defenceless public. And yet there are Hospital Committees who violently oppose any reform of such glaring evils as these.

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