

Mental (or Asylum-trained) Nurses; their Status and Registration. By T. OUTTERSON WOOD, M.D., Senior Physician, West End Hospital for Nervous Diseases, Welbeck Street, London, W.

GENTLEMEN,—I need offer no apology for once more bringing this subject before you, as its importance demands our immediate and careful consideration. More especially is this the case at the present time, because since I last alluded to it (at our annual meeting in July, 1905) the Select Committee of the House upon the State Registration of Nurses, has given to our nurses the stamp of official recognition, by inserting in their report the following opinion:—"The claims for Registration of Mental or Asylum Nurses have been laid before your Committee. They are of opinion that a separate Register of Registered Asylum Nurses should be kept by the Central Body, to which should be admitted the names of Nurses who have served for not less than three years (in not more than two Asylums) and who have received the certificate of the Medico-Psychological Association and can produce satisfactory certificates of good character."

I have quoted the opinion of the select committee, *in extenso*, because I desire to draw attention to the fact, that it recommends "a separate register of registered asylum nurses." Now, if that means that the Central Body shall keep a register of the asylum nurses that *we* have registered (and they must have been registered by us if they hold our certificate), it means that we must be careful to see that our system of registration is so good that it will be accepted for the purposes of State Registration in any Act of Parliament that may ultimately be passed. Therefore, the sooner we see about its re-organisation the better, and this is my reason for taking the opportunity of bringing the matter forward to-day.

This official recognition of the just claims of our nurses to be included in any scheme of State Registration will, it is to be hoped, tend to restrain the efforts of those who would restrict the nurses calling to any single class. There is no room on one pedestal for all of them—nursing is the birthright of all, and whether it falls to the lot of man or woman to minister to

the sick and suffering, it cannot be claimed as the prerogative of any—I take it that the essentials of good nursing are not merely technical, but they are also largely personal, and comprise such attributes, among others, as trustworthiness, reliability, promptitude in emergency, patience, cheerfulness, self-denial, and last, but not least, courage in the face of danger, and, in the words of the motto of the Royal British Nurses' Association, the nurse must be "Steadfast and True." Attributes such as these belong to no sex or class, and no certificate can confer them. Training and education may, however, develop and strengthen them, and no one recognised this more than the members of our Association when we inaugurated our system of training years ago.

The hospitals of to-day can justly claim to have the sick within their walls tended by a body of well-equipped female nurses, who are taught, trained, and examined in their duties. We can likewise claim that the patients in our hospitals for the insane are nursed and cared for by an equally devoted, trained, taught, and examined band of competent mental nurses, *including males* as well as females. Parturient women of all classes, rich or poor, can have the aid of specially-trained obstetric nurses, and, under the control of the Midwives Board, there is developing another class of trained women who are being taught, trained, and examined in the special work of their calling. Again, in the outlying places among the scattered communities of the agricultural class, as well as in the slums of the cities, there are being developed the rural and district nurses. All these nurses, in their several departments, are doing good service to the State, which, by the force of public opinion, is becoming more and more alive to its responsibility for the proper nursing of the poor and needy.

We, in our own special work, are not less conscious of the responsibility that rests upon ourselves to do all that in us lies to render efficient the nursing of those who suffer the greatest of all afflictions, the disorders of the mind.

That we have been alive to our responsibilities, and that we have not worked in vain to achieve the object for which we have striven for years, is proved by the verdict of the independent tribunal, which has recognised the right of our male and female nurses, who have gone through the curriculum laid down by our Association, who have been examined and found

worthy of holding our certificate for proficiency in nursing the insane, to State recognition, and it has added to its recommendation that they shall also be able to produce certificates of good character, about which there need be no difficulty if it be done officially, as I shall endeavour to show presently.

Now, having referred to the status given to our nurses by the Select Committee, before passing to the subject of registration I should like to say a few words with regard to the work asylum nurses are trained to do, because it may help us to appreciate how vastly it differs in its special character from the work of other nurses. The nursing of the insane is by no means limited to sick nursing, as the medical and surgical nursing of our cases (I mean the hospital nursing in its strict sense) is but a part of their daily routine, for, when the medical or surgical case of the insane individual is successfully treated and recovery comes, there yet remains the mental disorder, which has been present all the time, and which must also be nursed and treated to recovery. Here it is that our special teaching and training becomes so valuable, and the individual fitness of the nurse proves of such importance. Thus it places upon us the responsibility for seeing that those who hold our certificate are not only technically, but are also personally, qualified for this particular work. When the sick insane patient recovers from the illness which has rendered detention in bed necessary, be it some phase of mental disease, be it pneumonia, fever, or a fracture or other injury, the real special nursing of the insane so inseparable from successful treatment must still be carried out if recovery is to be promoted. The popular idea is that no patients require nursing unless they are bedridden; than this nothing can be more fallacious. In the case of the insane, the very nature of mental disorder in so many cases renders exercise and occupation in the open-air imperative, and this would be impossible but for the care and vigilance of trained and competent nurses. This treatment can only be rendered successful by means of such nurses, and no hospital can give them the training this special work requires, and more particularly is this so with regard to our male nurses. Having thus briefly alluded to the status of our nurses and the special nature of their work, it will be well worth our while to consider if we cannot in some way improve our system of registration so as to bring it up to

present and future requirements, more especially with the view of strengthening our position when the question of State Registration comes again before the legislature.

There is no doubt whatever that there will very shortly be one, if not more, bills promoted, and we must be prepared to strengthen the advanced position we have so far gained. This, I think, can best be done by supporting the Bill which is being promoted by the Royal British Nurses' Association, and, as soon as ever possible, by enlarging and improving our present system of registration, which, however excellent for our purpose during the last ten years, is in urgent need of extension and reorganisation now, in order that it may keep pace with the increasing sphere of our operations.

The reason why I think we should support the Bill of the Royal British Nurses' Association is because, in the Bill which it is now promoting, it is proposed that our Association shall have a representative upon the Central Board. This was omitted in the Bill as originally drafted, but on January 8th, as your President, I attended a meeting of the General Council, accompanied by the Chairman of our Parliamentary Committee, Professor Ernest White, and we succeeded in satisfying the Council that, in view of the fact that the Select Committee had recommended that our mental or asylum trained nurses should be State registered, we justly claimed to have some one to represent their interests on the Central Board. This was ultimately passed by a large majority.

Now as to Registration.

According to our present arrangement the names of nurses proposing to present themselves for examination are sent in to the Registrar at a given time before the examinations, which are held each year in May and November.

The collection of all these names from the various institutions scattered throughout the kingdom entails a considerable amount of work and responsibility upon the Registrar, who seems to have no possible opportunity of knowing anything about the personal qualifications of all these hundreds of male and female nurses who are registered year by year.

To remedy this, and to bring our system up to our present requirements, and to make it so complete that we may be able

to advocate keeping in our own hands the registration of mental or asylum-trained nurses for the purposes of State Registration, I would venture to suggest some such scheme as the following :—

(1) That in each Division of the Association the Divisional Committee shall act as the Registration Board for that Division, with the Secretary or some other member of the committee as the Local Registrar.

(2) The Local Registrars shall receive applications of all candidates for examination from the various institutions within their Divisions. They shall make, by means of printed forms approved by the Council, all necessary inquiries as to the personal fitness and good character of each candidate. The replies received shall be laid before their Boards, and the names of those candidates who satisfy the Boards in these respects shall be sent up to the General Registrar, together with the names of the institution or institutions in which they have been trained, and the date or dates of their training.

(3) The names of candidates who have successfully passed the examinations shall be laid before the Council of the Association, as the Central Registration Board, by the General Registrar for its approval, and for its authority for the certificates to be signed by the President before placing them upon the Register, wherein shall also be entered the name of the institution or institutions in which the candidates have been trained, and the date or dates of training.

By the adoption of some such plan as this the recommendations of the Select Committee with regard to the production of certificates of good character would be met officially, and it would help us to insure a closer personal knowledge of the candidates, which can only be procured locally, and which would greatly strengthen our position in advocating our system of registration before a Governmental Board.

These, briefly, are the broad principles I venture to submit to the meeting. I feel sure, if this important matter can be taken in hand and settled without delay, that we shall have made a satisfactory step towards placing our registration upon a wider basis, and that it will also place us in a stronger position with regard to State Registration, and give us a more reliable method of acquiring a personal knowledge of our nurses than we at present possess.

I have not, for obvious reasons, said anything about the examinations themselves, because they are outside this question of registration, and because they are entirely within the province of the Education Committee, which we know is doing all that is possible to keep up the standard and to work out the details of the examinations. I have only briefly and crudely laid the subject before you, and I trust the members present will give us the benefit of their views upon it, and help us to formulate a scheme that will work out in detail so as to meet the pressing requirements of the moment.

There is just one other matter I should like to draw attention to, and it is this. I hear there is a Register, but how few of us have ever seen it, and yet it is most important that we should do so, in order that we may be able to say, if asked by a Central Board for State Registration, that we have seen it. I also think it would be a good thing if the Register could be laid before the Council for inspection from time to time, and that each president in turn should sign it. It is a very valuable book, and it would be well if an authentic duplicate could be prepared and deposited among the archives of the Association. This duplicate should be kept up to date, and also be produced, compared with the original, and signed by each president in turn at the same time as the original Register. Our record would then be safe in the event of the original being lost or accidentally destroyed.

DISCUSSION

At the Quarterly Meeting held on February 23rd, 1906, at the West Riding Asylum, Wakefield.

Dr. HAYES NEWINGTON expressed the great indebtedness of the Association to Dr. Outtersson Wood for his energetic action in this matter. Dr. Wood had been mainly instrumental in ensuring for asylum nurses the consideration which was due to them, and in arranging that the Association should control the registration of its nurses. He knew that the Bishop of Wakefield, who was present, was in sympathy with the Association's work, and he expressed the hope that his Lordship would do them the honour of expressing his views on this important subject.

The BISHOP OF WAKEFIELD (rising) said: Gentlemen,—In response to your kind invitation, I should like to say what a great privilege I take it to be to be invited to meet you upon this occasion, and what a privilege it is to bear my humble testimony to the great value of trained nurses in mental cases. I am a member of a profession which is very closely brought into contact—perhaps more closely than any profession except your own—with all sorts and conditions of men. In the course of our visitation among the poor we are constantly brought into contact with cases which afterwards develop into those that are received into your asylums. We also follow these cases into your asylums, as Dr. Bevan Lewis could bear testimony. I can only say that whenever I have had the honour of an opportunity, as I had recently in Kent, and since then in the West Riding of Yorkshire, of looking

into an asylum, I have been hardly able to express my sense of the extraordinary change which has taken place in the surroundings of the insane who are received into these institutions. This difference is more marked in the department of attendants and nurses who now wait upon them than in any other department. I can remember very well the state of things forty years ago, and there is no doubt of the enormous advance which has taken place in that part of the work, and I believe I am right in saying that that advance is due, more than to any other cause, to the patient and praiseworthy work of your Association.

Dr. NEWINGTON.—I beg to propose a very hearty vote of thanks to the President for his able address, and I would suggest that this matter be remitted to the sub-Committee already charged with the work of registration.

Dr. HARDING said he was extremely reluctant to intervene in the discussion, but as one who had taken a great interest in the subject for some years he felt he ought to say a few words. From what the President had said he gathered that there were two questions for consideration. First, what was to be the qualification for the registration of nurses? and second, what was to be the constitution of the body which was to determine the extent of the training which was to qualify for it? He was as jealous as anyone that the asylum nurse should stand on a level with the hospital nurse. In the past the former had been put on a lower level, and he regretted to find that separate registration for asylum nurses was proposed. If the Medico-Psychological Association's Certificate was to be the standard, he was sorry it was not a higher one. He fully appreciated the difficulty of the Legislature recognising a number of qualifying bodies, and he could see the advantage of having one qualifying certificate for purposes of registration. He was prepared, if the Medico-Psychological Association carried its point, to give every assistance to such members of his staff as desired to qualify for registration, but he would use all his influence to allow a nurse possessing any other qualification to register it. He presumed that no other body than the Association, however capable, was to have a voice in deciding what was to be the training of an asylum nurse. That, he contended, was a false position. They would find other people claiming to have representation upon the Committee, and it was a claim which could not be resisted.

Dr. PERCY SMITH seconded the reference of the subject to the sub-Committee, and this was agreed to.

The PRESIDENT acknowledged the vote of thanks, and said he had taken a deep interest in this question, both inside and outside the Association, for the last ten years, and he was very gratified with the result.

The Nursing Staff at the Metropolitan Asylum, Leavesden; Notes upon a Scheme of Promotion. By
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SINCE October, 1902, there has been in operation at the Metropolitan Asylum, Leavesden, a system of promotion for nurses and attendants.

When a vacancy occurs in the office of charge nurse, deputy charge nurse, night nurse, or third nurse the vacancy is announced in the mess-room, and applications are invited to be forthcoming by a given date.

When the vacancy is for a charge nurse those eligible are