

EDITORIAL COMMENT



NORTH CAROLINA LEADS

WE offer our congratulations to the North Carolina State Nurses' Association in being the first to secure the passage of a bill for registration. The bill is printed in another department, and is a poor substitute, we are told, for the original bill. All of the bills, as originally drawn, differ on so many points, and are being so torn to pieces in the hands of the legislators, that we reserve all comment as to their comparative merits until the battle is over. Each State has met the same kind of opposition, that of the commercial interests of private hospitals or quack nursing schools, as in the case of New Jersey, or, like New York, has been caught in the toils of medical politics, but even if the results are in a measure humiliating, the public knows much more about nurses and their standards than it did two months ago.

THE PUBLIC PRESS

IN North Carolina and New Jersey the press comments have, to some degree, shown ignorance and prejudice,—that is, so far as we are informed. In Illinois and New York adverse comment has been the exception. This has been notable in New York City, where the *Tribune*, *Sun*, *Times*, and the *Evening Post* have repeatedly given editorial encouragement, and the *Outlook* of March 14 gave a most satisfactory editorial on the subject of the New York bill. Albany, Rochester, Syracuse, Utica, and Buffalo papers have shown a friendly attitude.

MEDICAL SUPPORT

IN the official department, in the report of the chairman of the Legislative Committee of the New York State Nurses' Association, mention will be found of the resolution passed by the Medical Society of the State of New York in support of the nurses' bill. This action of the Medical Society, with its six thousand members, while it may not have expressed the individual opinion of every physician enrolled, is the most gratifying incident that the New York nurses have to record. The unanimous endorsement of the nurses' bill, the willingness on the part of this great representative body to assist rather than to dictate, was a splendid expression of the respect and confidence with which at least the majority of the medical men of the State regard the women of the nursing profession.

To Dr. Frank Van Fleet, of New York City, chairman of the Legislative Committee of the Medical Society, the nurses owe an everlasting debt of gratitude. During the Albany campaign without his presence, advice, and assistance the leaders would many times, in their inexperience, have been brought to confusion, and the fact that he represented such a great force in the medical profession gave them courage to stand for what they believed to be right.

A QUESTION OF ETHICS

It was quite puzzling to find that Dr. A. G. Root, of Albany, also one of the Legislative Committee of the Medical Society, seemed to be leading the opposition to the bill, as when he arose to speak he announced that he *represented* the Medical Society of the State of New York.

The opposition speaks first at these hearings, and when Dr. Van Fleet's turn came the discrepancy between his announcement of official instruction and Dr. Root's personal claim raised a problem in ethics that the delegation present is still attempting to solve.

INDIVIDUAL INFLUENCE

NEVER has there been a clearer demonstration of the fact that the women at the heads of training-schools have great power to mould public opinion in regard to nursing affairs, and according as they have been active, we find laymen and physicians intelligently sympathetic or otherwise.

Throughout the movement it was easy to point out the places where the women in hospital positions were indifferent or timid by the absence of general interest and aid in those places. They were also so few in number as to be doubly conspicuous.

The adverse influence of the Buffalo Nurses' Club was counterbalanced by the Erie County Alumnae Association and by the fact that there were in Buffalo some strong individual supporters of the movement.

In Albany, where there is but one hospital of prominence and where nursing standards are comparatively new to the general public, not only was no work done in shaping public opinion, but the opposition was concentrated there, and the one woman whose position gave her, for the time being, the opportunity of leading nursing opinions in Albany appeared on the side of the opposition.

THE OBJECTION TO MEDICAL EXAMINERS

IN standing out for a Board of Examiners composed exclusively of nurses the New York nurses are not making a stand against doctors. It must be borne in mind that "registration" in New York State is a long-established executive department of the government. It is the law of the State that all of the professions nominate to the Regents members of their own profession from whom the Examining Board is selected.

Registration is the first step towards placing nursing upon the basis of a profession, and for this reason, if for no other, recognition is to be secured if possible.

Three medical examiners, one from each medical society,—allopathic, homœopathic, and eclectic,—would seem to open the way to the most dire confusion in nursing affairs. Medical men of both the allopathic and homœopathic schools advised resisting this proposition. With such a system the nursing interests at Albany would become involved in medical politics, of which a little experience has already been felt.

Medical interests in nursing matters are provided for in New York by the three physicians who are members of the Board of Regents.

But, more than all, the highest and most noble type of men among physicians do not want to be represented or to serve on the Nursing Board. That type of men the nurses are perfectly willing to trust in every way, feeling sure of liberal

justice always at their hands, but it is the kind of men who are determined to dictate and force themselves upon the Nursing Board whom the nurses are afraid to trust.

THE BEST JUDGES

NURSES are the best judges of the qualifications of nurses. The difficulties of nurses are best understood by nurses, and there can be none more capable of dealing justly and fairly with all of the problems that registration will bring than nurses themselves, with the Board of Regents, with its three medical men, as the final court of appeal. That the New York State Nurses' Association should nominate from its members names from whom the Regents shall select the Examining Board is simply in line with the treatment accorded the other professions.

THE PROFESSION DISGRACED

JUST at the time when the nurses all over the country were soliciting the support of the public in their efforts to secure legislation, and when the press was commenting favorably in behalf of the movement, an occurrence which took place at the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary brought disgrace upon the entire nursing profession.

The facts as we give them are given us by an officer of the hospital:

Feeling dissatisfied with some changes that were being made in the administration of the hospital, eleven members of the nursing staff left in a body without previous notice. This occurred on the evening of February 28. Four of these nurses left letters of resignation on the superintendent's desk when they went off duty at eight P.M., but all failed to appear at the regular time the next morning.

Leaving the hospital handicapped for service is not the most serious of the charges to be brought against these nurses. It was found that medicines had been mixed, atropia put into cocaine bottles, etc., and lenses changed about in such a manner that it was with difficulty that order was again secured.

When we consider the critical nature of eye nursing, and realize that through lack of care for a few hours or accident the life of a human being may be plunged into perpetual darkness, there are no words too strong in which our condemnation of these women can be expressed.

The New York *Tribune* in commenting upon this occurrence asked the question very justly, "Are these the women who are asking for State registration under the Regents?" With State registration it might be possible to warn the public against such women, but as it is, there seems to be no redress for such unprofessional conduct, which demonstrated that their own personal, petty grievances were of greater moment than the welfare of helpless patients.

ANNOUNCEMENT

WE are obliged to hold over for want of space an unusual number of letters and items. This number is unavoidably a little late.