

two years only those Nurses have been eligible who could produce evidence that they had been trained for three years in recognized Hospitals.

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In the spring of 1891 it was resolved to incorporate the society under the Companies Acts, but without the word "Limited," a privilege which is allowed to non-trading bodies. Application was duly made to the Board of Trade, but much to the surprise of the committee the permission was refused, on the ground that objection had been taken. But the Association was not told who were the objectors nor what their objections were; and it was not given an opportunity of defending itself against these anonymous accusations. It is doubtful whether the Board of Trade was within its rights in refusing the privilege conferred by the Act, and subsequently, on being approached, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, who was then President, advised the Association to apply for a Royal Charter of Incorporation. A petition was presented in due course, and an inquiry will be held to-day in relation thereto by the Privy Council, the members appointed to hear the parties being Earl Spencer, Lord Aberdare, and Mr. Arthur Acland.

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It will surprise those who have not followed this movement to learn that certain London and provincial hospitals—not by any means the majority—have been fighting tooth-and-nail this independent effort on the part of the leaders of the medical and nursing professions to bring about reforms amongst Nurses, and it was they who objected to the application to the Board of Trade, and are now opposing the prayer of the petition for a Royal Charter. The main ground of the opposition is that the Association compiles and publishes every year a book containing the names, addresses, and dates and places of hospital training of some eighteen hundred Nurses, called the Register of Trained Nurses. This is supposed to reflect upon the Nurses employed by these institutions and all others who may not be on the Register, but the Association welcomes every qualified Nurse, so that no practical grievance is caused. Objection to any register at all is, of course, simply raising the cry of a previous generation when a register of the medical profession was formed. The necessity for protecting the public against the "quack" doctor has long been admitted, and some day, no doubt, there will be an equally stringent rule against unqualified Nurses. But the Association does not propose to set up any such standard for the present; all that it wishes to do is to supply the public with a list of those who are qualified. Thereby they are doing the public as well as themselves a very considerable service. It is notorious that ignorant women, and even criminals, now call themselves trained Nurses, and obtain work as such, and their patients are at their mercy. This is a scandal, the existence of which not even the opposing hospitals will deny; they have declined to give any assistance in putting an end to it, and yet they strenuously oppose any one else attempting to do so. With a register setting forth the qualifications of the Nurses, revised from time to time by a qualified board, the public can assure themselves that they are entrusting their sick to competent and trustworthy hands.

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Whatever specious objections may be urged to the mild form of regulation which the Association has established, the real grounds of opposition are, we believe, to be found

in the system pursued by several of our general hospitals. It is notorious that the Nursing staffs of these institutions are so worked as to be very lucrative. They are the means of earning large sums of money for the hospitals, and that source of income would, to a large extent, vanish were a universal register established. For why? A three years' training is made the minimum qualification for registration, but probationers are often sent out to private work from the hospitals with only a few months, or, perhaps, a year's training. They receive very small remuneration for their work, while the usual fees are levied for the service, and the gain goes into the purse of the hospital. On the one hand, the public are deceived, because they believe that they are receiving the services of trained Nurses; and, on the other, the Nurses are not only defrauded of the education promised to them, but are also "sweated" rigorously. The incomes of several influential institutions are known to be very considerably enlarged by these means, but it is not a system that will bear investigation. The Lords' Committee have put on record their opinion that "the minimum period after which a Nurse can advertised as thoroughly trained is three years, and, considering the large amount of money these Nurses can earn for the hospital, the committee think that a sliding scale commission on their earnings, mentioned as being in practice at one of the large general hospitals, would be a fair addition to their regular hospital wages." There is no doubt that the system leads to a good deal of that overwork of which we hear from time to time as the ward staffs are reduced, and the sick poor in these hospitals, therefore, lose their attendants in order to meet this lucrative outside demand. Presumably this phase of the question will not be referred to by the objectors to the petition before the Privy Council, but it is bound to be developed if the whole of the facts are laid bare; and the public who maintain these hospitals should demand to know the names of those which thus apparently place commerce before charity."

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This article was followed on the 23rd by the appearance of a remarkable effusion from the pen of Mr. ERNEST ABRAHAM HART, M.R.C.S., a humble friend and follower of Mr. HENRY C. BURDETT. At present, I will say nothing further than to express my surprise that any Committee of the British Medical Association should possess a Chairman who is apparently so ignorant both of good manners and legal customs. It is plain that neither Mr. HART's personality nor his remarks were considered to be of sufficient importance for the Privy Council to notice the undeniable "contempt of court" which he had committed. But, for the credit of the British Medical Association, I hope that the absurdity of this gentleman instructing the highest court of law in the Empire on a legal matter, will not cause the serious fact to be overlooked that the matter on which he discoursed was *sub judice*. However, the effusion was as follows, and perhaps the quiet and conclusive reply which it evoked from Dr. GEORGE BROWN was sufficiently crushing without the contemptuous silence with which it has been received by every one else.

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