

MEMORIAL OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WESTMINSTER TRAINING SCHOOL AND HOME FOR NURSES.

*Address to the Right Honourable the President of the Board of Trade against the Application of the British Nurses' Association for a Licence to be Registered as a Limited Liability Company without the Addition of the Word "Limited" to its Name.*

The attention of the Committee of the Westminster Training School and Home for Nurses has been drawn to an application made to the Board of Trade by the British Nurses' Association for permission to Register as a Limited Liability Company without attaching the word "Limited" to the title.

This application the Committee feel called upon to oppose, inasmuch as they have ground for believing that the principal object in view is that which the Memorandum of Association particularly specifies as one of the objects, namely, the formation, control, and carrying on of a Register of Trained Nurses, and the taking over, controlling, and carrying on of any such Register which may have been or shall hereafter be established by any person or persons or Association, whether incorporated or not. The Committee is of opinion that, with regard to everyone affected, there is no such "useful object" to be thereby gained as is especially contemplated in the clause of the Company's Act of 1867 which governs these applications, but that, on the contrary, the effect would be distinctly injurious to the best interests of Nurses themselves, as well as of the public, who are deeply and directly concerned in their efficiency. Without insisting upon the claim to consideration which the existing, well-established, and efficient Training Schools for Nurses might fairly press, the Committee think that they are amply justified in protesting against the acquisition of powers such as these by a self-appointed, self-governing association, which is under no public recognition or control of any kind.

The Committee do not fail to recognise that further improvement in the training and status of Nurses may possibly be devised in the future, and they are persuaded that before the far-reaching and practically exclusive powers which the Company aims at appropriating are called into existence, there is need of greater experience than has hitherto been acquired, and of a much more searching and thorough examination into the whole question than has as yet been undertaken. It is not too much to say that at present the consensus of opinion among the authorities of the large Training Schools is distinctly adverse to the establishment of a General Register of Nurses, which virtually carries with

it the right to give a quasi-public certificate or licence.

Before going further the Committee wish to point out that the Registration of Midwives, which is also introduced into the Memorandum of Association, stands altogether on a different footing from the Registration of Nurses, and ought not to be combined or confused with it. The primary qualifications of a Midwife are essentially of a technical character, capable of being ascertained by examination, and of being registered with advantage. She cannot properly be classed as a Nurse.

Turning to the proposal as it affects Nurses, the Committee wish to emphasise their conviction that to the Nurses themselves—certainly to the better Nurses—injury, not advantage, would follow. If the movement is to prove attractive, the Register must at first be open to the many thousands of women who describe themselves as "Nurses," and with the system of Registration in full work, the presence of the name on the Register would naturally be held to be sufficient evidence of capacity. A delusive uniformity would effectually neutralise the desirable variety of standard in the different training schools, and reduce all Nurses to an equality more apparent than real.

Do Nurses, do the public, desire it so to be? Again, in any examination for admission to the Register, it would not be possible to test many of the most essential qualities of a Nurse, such as temper, tact, firmness, observation, presence of mind, fertility of resource, not to mention points of character of even greater importance.

The Committee wish also to draw attention to the way in which this proposed scheme would affect the public. If a General Register were set up in the present condition of the Nursing world, the rule for the sick and their friends would be *caveat emptor*. As matters stand, each training school is responsible for its own Nurses in every respect, and it is to its interest to act up to its responsibility, its reputation and success being more or less in the hands of every Nurse it employs.

There is no examination so searching as that which is constantly being applied in the Hospital or sick room, and if the Nurses were inefficient or untrustworthy, the Institution that employed or supplied them would soon be called to account. Moreover, each training school keeps its own Register, and it is open to the public to apply directly to the authorities of the school for information concerning the Nurses.

In this way all the supposed advantages of a General Register or Authorised Directory of Nurses are secured and many more.

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