

they compelled the Association to apply for this Charter by preventing its incorporation in the humble and ordinary manner under the Companies' Acts? It is rumoured that they now greatly regret having taken that step, and we, on our part, can quite "believe" it. They "believe" that by means of this position and dignity, and by reason of the control which it would have over the Register of Nurses, the Association would be enabled "to acquire a real power of determining the qualifications requisite to constitute a Trained Nurse, and of regulating and controlling the training and education of the whole body of Nurses." It is requisite to examine this "belief" somewhat carefully, as upon it, practically, hangs the whole of this lengthy Petition.

At present, as our readers are aware, there is not, in any part of the civilised world, a generally-accepted curriculum of Nursing education, and it can safely be predicted that even Mr. J. G. WAINWRIGHT could not propound a course of study which would be accepted by one-twentieth of the Hospitals now engaged in training Nurses. "To determine the qualifications requisite to constitute a Trained Nurse" means nothing more nor less than reducing chaos to order, and defining a standard of training applicable alike to the largest General, and the smallest Cottage, Hospital—a Herculean task, and one which, we imagine, the governing body of the Royal British Nurses' Association would hastily decline to undertake, even at the unanimous request of all the Hospitals of the country. But the Association, it is believed, will also have a "real power" of "regulating and controlling the training and education of the whole body of Nurses." And here we arrive at a "belief" which is manifestly ridiculous. The Petitioners wisely omit to state how this "real power" of dictating to some hundreds of Institutions—bodies independent of each other, and each maintained by their own subscribers—is to be obtained. And it requires no reasoning to prove that it would require an Act of Parliament, with the most drastic provisions, to secure the necessary authority for such regulation and control to be efficient. And such an Act, it is equally certain, would never be passed, because if the State thus delegated the control of these Institutions to any outside body, it would be compelled at the same time to provide the necessary funds for the maintenance of all the Hospitals in the country.

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Such wholesale powers, therefore, are never likely to be granted in this country, but if they were, it is quite certain that no body, however powerful, could ever carry them fully out. The "belief," in fact, as we have said, is manifestly ridiculous, and is chiefly important as indicative of the extreme lengths to which the opponents of the Association have been driven in order to construct arguments against it.

This is further exemplified in the next paragraph, in which it is gravely advanced, and, we are glad to see, quite truthfully—that the Register of the Association would not state whether a Nurse had gentleness, tact, and presence of mind. Nor, in like manner, we imagine, would it state the colour of her hair or eyes, or her exact height and weight. But—say the Petitioners—without these personal and moral characteristics "no training can produce a good Nurse." The chief deduction from this argument would be that womanly qualities are all that Nurses need, that technical knowledge is of no value at all in their case, and that Training Schools, consequently, are quite unnecessary.

It is quite astonishing that the drafters of this Petition have not realised the logical outcome of their argument. Because the whole contention of the opponents of the Association is, that Diana of the Ephesians is very great; whereas, this argument as to the minor importance of technical knowledge minimises at once the value and importance of the Training Schools.

The Petition next proceeds to state that great advances have been made as regards the extent and quality of the training given to Nurses. However true this may be, so far as the Hospitals which advocate Registration are concerned—and we are glad to admit that in their case it is very true—it is certainly not the fact as regards St. Thomas's and the London Hospital, for example—to take the two chief opponents of reform; because at these Institutions it is notorious that progress has been altogether absent in the one case, and distinctly retrograde in the other.

The rest of the Petition contains statements, which are most amusingly contradictory of each other, and to which we must devote attention on another occasion. For the present, we need only point out that they are not supported by any proof, and that we imagine it will be found very difficult, if not altogether impossible, to prove them. But it is significant that the Petition distinctly admits that improvements are necessary.

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