

on the register it would be extremely difficult to get it off. I shall ask your lordships to consider the importance of that statement presently, when I deal with the machinery which at present exists for the protection of the public and the means whereby effective and trained Nurses are supplied and information can be obtained with regard to their efficiency. But when your lordships observe that the Charter itself contemplates bye-laws to which effect could not be given by a mere grant from the Crown; and when your lordships couple that with the knowledge that what I may call the practical revision of this register, becomes an impossibility, it will, of course, enormously strengthen my argument, namely, that it is undesirable both for the nursing profession itself—for the Nurses themselves—and for the public whom they render most useful service, that anything of the kind having as it will have, getting as it will get, as the promoters wish it to get, a sanction as being a Register by Royal Charter, should be in existence; as it will have (and the promoters of the Charter do not deny it) the appearance of being an authentic record. Our case has not been read to your lordships, and I do not desire to read it, but when it is suggested that no reasons have been given for the view that is submitted by those who oppose this Charter and for the apprehensions that are entertained with regard to its operations, I think possibly my learned friend must have overlooked many paragraphs in the case lodged by order of your lordships, and in which reference is made to the public record of the evidence given by those who most strongly support the scheme and from which most distinct conclusions are drawn, which conclusions I shall ask your lordships to endorse. A good deal was said this morning as to the impossibility of registering what my learned friend called—and very properly—the important qualifications of tact of judgment and of character. No register can, of course, give the information, and my learned friend drew from that the conclusion that a register which contains imperfect or insufficient information, shows that they (the Hospitals and Training Schools) do not keep in touch, as I think, he expressed it, with the Nurses. We ask your lordships to draw a contrary conclusion in the matter. Having regard to what the necessities of the calling of Nurses are, if persons desire information with regard to the qualifications of a particular person, they should go and be led to go to inquire at the place where they can obtain that kind of information. My learned friend spoke, somewhat slightly, on the information which Hospitals can afford. At least, I am entitled to say this, not upon my own suggestions, but upon the evidence to which I am about to refer your lordships presently, that in the case of Hospitals the persons to whom reference is made have personal knowledge of the character of the nurses, have personal knowledge of the way in which their duties are performed in a very large majority of cases, showing there is what my learned friend called touch, and what I shall call personal relations between the Hospitals and nurses. It is to these bodies that the confidential communications are made, which must be of a confidential character, which could not be disclosed in a register, which would subject the keeper of the register to serious consequences if they were disclosed, and which if it did not subject him to these serious consequences, would necessitate statutory protection being given to the keeper of the register in regard to the information they contain. And it is because the subject has not been sufficiently considered by my learned friend in his argument, that I have to press upon your lordships that when you are dealing with the profession of nurses and with the qualifications of nurses it would be a misleading thing to the public, and a very undesirable thing to the public that there should be a register sanctioned by your lordships' Charter, and which it is the object of the promoters shall supersede, and be resorted to, by the public, in preference to the register or

information which is kept in the hospitals themselves,

LORD HANNEN: This Register would point out the particular places and institutions where the public could go and get this information.

SIR RICHARD WEBSTER: I quite follow your lordship's meaning, but that is what we dispute, and we say that is exactly what the public will not do.

LORD HANNEN: The public need not be misled.

SIR RICHARD WEBSTER: Look what the consequences will be. We have got to consider, not what will be or what ought to be, but whether the Register itself is a desirable thing having regard to the use that will be made of it. And I say—it is not my language at all, or my opinion merely, but that of the promoters themselves—that this Register will supersede, for the purpose of reference, other Registers, and will take the position of being a sufficient certificate and representation that the Nurse is fully qualified.

LORD HOBHOUSE: Your argument will be that such a Register as this will put persons off inquiries?

SIR RICHARD WEBSTER: Certainly.

LORD HOBHOUSE: At the place when inquiries would be supposed to be made?

SIR RICHARD WEBSTER: Yes.

LORD HOBHOUSE: One feels your argument about the vagueness of the Charter, but according to the regulations of the—

SIR RICHARD WEBSTER (interposing): I am about to deal with the Charter as I find it.

LORD HANNEN: It states in the provision as to the powers of the Corporation that they desire to keep a list of Nurses and the name and address of the Hospitals and other places in which the nurses have been trained.

SIR RICHARD WEBSTER: What Lord Hannen means is that, at least, the Register must contain that whether it contains more or not.

LORD HANNEN: That is so.

SIR RICHARD WEBSTER: At least that it will be a Register which will enable the public to find out that. That is what Lord Hannen means.

LORD HOBHOUSE: I was thinking that under the bye-laws the Register might contain the opinion of the Association itself, on examination, or whatever conditions they pleased, and that no doubt might put people off inquiry, for they might be satisfied with that. But at present it seems they are put on inquiry.

SIR RICHARD WEBSTER: I agree with Lord Hannen that the Register does give notice to persons where they can obtain information, but there is nothing to suggest they should go to them or obtain that information. May I put this case to your lordships. Suppose a Hospital Nurse or a Nurse is sent out on the instructions of a doctor. She produces a certificate which appears to be a certificate of long standing or one granted some years ago. In such a case reference could be made or might be made to the hospital for information. But in the case of a Register which is supposed to be revised from year to year, and upon which the names of the Nurses remain with the sanction of the committee of the Register then the case is different. I know it may be said the public ought not to be misled, but I submit the fact that there is a Chartered Register, revised from year to year, will lead them to think the Register is an important document. Those who instruct me desire that I should press as strongly as I can on your lordships that a Register of that kind ought under no circumstances to be permitted, unless safeguarded by statutory provisions which no charter can have inserted. I shall ask your lordships to come to the conclusion that the inevitable effect of such a Register would be that it would be regarded as an authentic certificate of the qualifications of Nurses, and would lead to serious evils and dangers, the consequences of which cannot be fully understood by your lordships until I have called attention to the conclusions of

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)