

persons who have seriously considered this matter. Looking at the regulations, you will see that it is provided that applicants for registration must produce proof of good character, and show that they have been engaged in the work of nursing for three years, and so on. I am not now going to discuss the most important matter of the question of training schools for nurses, but your lordships will observe at once, when dealing with the question of a good school or bad school, it will be in the discretion of the Corporation, or the Managers of the Corporation, whether they shall insist upon training in a school, with a sufficient number of beds, to ensure the nurse has obtained a sufficient experience to be allowed to be a member of their Association. These regulations would not in any way touch the consideration I desire to call your lordship's attention to, namely, the fact that years afterwards there appears the name of a nurse on the register, without any means whatever, or the manager of a private company not in touch or connection with the persons from whom information could be obtained, ascertaining whether the nurse is a person who is likely to fulfil her duties.

LORD HOBHOUSE: Take a case that is given here in the petitioner's statement: Emma Bradley. She was registered in 1890. Her qualifications are certified from Leicester Infirmary, 1881 to 1884—three years. If I wanted further information I should go to Leicester.

SIR RICHARD WEBSTER: I perfectly understand your lordship. But assume we were in the year 1910 instead of the year 1892. All the register would then show would be that twenty years before a person had been certified to possess certain qualifications. What the public would be led to believe would be that these were the credentials of the Nurse. The maintenance of the Nurse's name on the Register is the important thing. I am only showing you what is the opinion of those who have examined into this matter, and it is supported by the notice by this Association itself. What do they say themselves? "The Board has carefully investigated the credentials of every applicant for registration and has the power of removing from the Register the name of any Nurse who, after full inquiry, may prove herself hereafter to be unworthy of trust. . . . The Registration Board wish it to be most distinctly stated that it cannot answer for the technical knowledge of any registered Nurse nor for the nature of the training which she has received, but that every hospital must of necessity be held responsible for the credentials which it has issued, and upon which the Registration Board is compelled to rely." I ask your lordships to consider what the position would be in the year 1910, to an ordinary member of the public. The fact that the register continued to bear the Nurse's name would be regarded as a most important point. I shall have to point out presently how the vast majority of medical men agree that good as a hospital qualification may be, important as the power of passing examinations may be, it is by no means the most important thing in connection with a Nurse's training; that many Nurses can and do pass creditable examinations who, owing to their habit and temper and character are unfitted to be successful Nurses. And may I point out to your lordships that the result of this register will be not that these certificates will be referred to, but it will be regarded as being a sufficiency in itself that the name of the Nurse is upon a register which is supposed to be revised every year. I would call your lordships' attention to one or two important matters, and first of all I shall put my position. I would ask your lordships to look at the report of the Lords Committee in the blue book of 21st June, 1892. "Objects of the British Nurses' Association. The view taken by the promoters of the Association appears to be that the time has come when nursing should be constituted and legally recognised as a distinct profession, with a central controlling body of its own, in short, that the nursing profession should be governed on much the same

lines as the medical profession. The Nurses' Register would resemble the Medical Register, and the General Nursing Council would take cognisance of the conduct of all Nurses, and would have the same power to strike their names off the Register for misconduct as in the case of the medical profession is exercisable by the General Medical Council. The ultimate object appears to be (whether or not this could be carried into effect at once) to obtain statutory power to prevent any public or private institution sending out women to nurse the sick who were not registered by a registration board, composed of medical men and hospital matrons, or at all events to prevent unregistered women calling themselves trained nurses." Your lordships heard this morning Sir Horace Davey say more than once that at least we can save the public from having unregistered women putting themselves upon them as trained nurses when they are unqualified women, because all qualified nurses are supposed to go on the register. I shall show your lordships that the object of the promoters of this institution is to get this register regarded by the public as being the authoritative register to which people are to go in order to get trained nurses.

LORD HANNEN: Are to go? To which they can go.

SIR RICHARD WEBSTER: My argument, my lord, is this. They themselves have said that they are seeking for a great deal more, and they are seeking this charter for a great deal more, and it is in that direction that I insist on the use of the words "are to go," instead of the words "can go." The promoters of the charter say that—"A Registration Board constituted under a Royal Charter or Act of Parliament would have such *prestige* that the public would decline to employ unregistered nurses." That, of course, is not a case of can go.

LORD HOBHOUSE: "Can go," practically leads to "must go."

SIR RICHARD WEBSTER: Or at any rate do go, and that is sufficient for my reasons. The Lord's report to which I have referred continues:—"It was claimed that some of the hospitals and many medical officers of hospitals were in favour of registration. The immediate advantage the public would gain from it was said to be that a reference to the register would at once show whether a woman was a trained Nurse or not, and whether she was ever known to have done anything rendering her unworthy of employment, because the name of a Nurse would, on sufficient cause shown, be removed from the register." These are the contentions of skilled persons who supported the view that the Charter or a Charter should be granted. The report continued, "The witness further said 'it was a very common fraud to steal or forge a hospital certificate. No hospital is responsible for a Nurse once she has left the hospital service, but a General Nursing Council or Registration Board would be responsible to the general body of Nurses and to the public; to prevent any woman, who proved herself unworthy of trust, going on with the work they would take her name off the Register.'" I shall have to ask your lordships to come to the conclusion that in order to make this Register effective they ought to rely—not that they will rely—but that they ought to rely on something beyond the production of a hospital certificate, which may have been granted eleven years ago. The report goes on:—"It is urged that neither the completion of a certain period of training, nor the passing of a theoretical examination is a sufficient guide to the practical fitness of a woman for a Nurse's work. Only the Institute, which has actually trained the Nurse, and in which her qualities are recorded after long personal observations, can be in a position to give such a guarantee of her capacity as will be of any practical value. If, for example, a member of the public goes to such a general register for a Nurse, he gets someone who has passed through a certain curriculum; if he applies to any Nurse-training Hospital he gets a Nurse selected for the particular case, and backed by the authority

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)