

Sir H. DAVEY: Pardon me; I said no practical part.

Sir R. WEBSTER: Well, no practical part. My lords, Miss Nightingale it is true is not now in such good health, but she has throughout taken the most active interest in the working of the system and in the training of Nurses, and in this question of the best method of securing properly qualified and efficient Nurses. For the last thirty or forty years she has given the most intense attention to the subject, and has brought to bear upon it her own practical knowledge, and that fact will prevent the weight of her opinion to-day being diminished simply in consequence of the circumstance that her actual services are past. There is a most important memorandum on this matter at page 798 of the second report. It is a quotation from a speech by Mr. Rathbone, and it has been referred to a great deal. It was at a meeting of the representatives of hospitals and training schools, and Mr. Rathbone was speaking against the recognition by the Board of Trade of the establishment of a registry of trained Nurses by the Royal British Nurses' Association. Mr. Rathbone, on that occasion, said "It is in accordance with the wish of Miss Nightingale that I attend here to-day, as one of the Executive Committee of the Training School of the Nightingale Fund, to say in Miss Nightingale's own words, "that she does not think that a system of registration such as that proposed is for the benefit of the Nurses." It would be most unfortunate if personal antagonisms and rival claims should be mixed up with the vital question as to a system of registration such as that adopted by the British Nurses' Association, being for the benefit either of the Nurses themselves, or of the public. There seems an almost complete concensus of opinion on the part of all those who have done most of the training and improvement of Nurses during the last thirty years, that the scheme of a general register would tend to confuse and mislead the public."

Sir H. DAVEY: That is Mr. Rathbone, not Miss Nightingale.

Sir R. WEBSTER: I said so when I began (continuing the quotation, he went on), "and so far from promoting the improvement of nursing in this Kingdom, that it would tend to check its further progress; nay more, that it would tend seriously to lower the standard which we have, to some extent, attained, and to stereotype a standard of nursing dangerously low for both rich and poor. Such results could not be otherwise than injurious to the interests of both Nurses and the public. It is certain that the plan proposed will recommend to the confidence of the public a great number of utterly untrustworthy, incompetent Nurses, and it will be practically very difficult to take their names off the register though they may have proved themselves unworthy of such confidence. If it be asked, what alternative have we to propose in order to protect the public from incompetent nurses, I should reply that it would require the most careful consideration and the combined wisdom of those who have been so long at work in raising the standard of nursing and the supply to the public of good Nurses, to contrive and organise a safe alternative. It is only about thirty years since the public, or even the hospital authorities, became alive to the necessity of thoroughly trained Nurses. The number of good, well-trained Nurses is increasing rapidly; but they are still very few in comparison to the large majority who are imperfectly trained or incompetent. As Miss Nightingale has said:—"Twenty or thirty years hence, when so much progress has been made that our present time is looked back upon as the time of bad nursing, this registration might do." In a recent letter to me on the subject, Miss Nightingale says:—"You cannot select the good from the inferior Nurses by any test or system of examination. But most of all, and first of all, must their moral qualifications be made to stand pre-eminent in estimation. All this can only be secured by the current supervision, tests, or examinations which they receive in their training school

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