

We are requested to state that the following is the programme of the Annual Meeting of the Royal British Nurses' Association, at Oxford, on Monday next, July 24th. Trains leave Paddington—9.50 a.m. and 10.5 a.m.; arriving at Oxford—11.8 a.m. and 11.47 a.m. The Annual Meeting will be held in the Hall of Balliol College, at 12.15, when the chair will be taken by Sir HENRY ACLAND, Bart., K.C.B., Vice-President of the Association. Her Royal Highness, the President, has announced her intention to be present.

AGENDA.

1. Minutes of the last Meeting.
2. To receive Annual and Financial Report.
3. To elect a General Council for 1893-94.
4. Address by the Chairman.

The Luncheon will be held in the Hall of St. Mary Magdalen College, at 1.30 p.m. Tickets 2/6 each, which should be procured beforehand. The arrangements for the afternoon will be announced at the Luncheon.

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NURSES will read with much interest the following article which appeared in the *Lancet* on the 8th inst. The unprejudiced opinion thus deliberately expressed by the leading and representative medical journal will quite outweigh in all unprejudiced minds the virulent, untruthful, and malicious statements made by interested persons on the other side.

THE ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION.

We publish to-day, not without regret, a letter upon the subject of the charter of this Association, which bears the honoured name of Florence Nightingale, but on perusal turns out to be a contribution neither helpful nor timely to the now obsolete discussion concerning the Nurses' Register. We do not for a moment attribute to Miss Nightingale the authorship, in the English sense of the word "author," of the document to which her name is, amongst many others, appended; but an *auctor*, in the Latin sense, she unquestionably is, as being the most distinguished of the signatory parties to the document, and if only because of the great authority which, in all matters affecting the practice of nursing, her name most justly carries it becomes necessary to point out that she has on this occasion been misled into a serious misapprehension as to matters of fact and has been betrayed into lending her support to a most unworthy attack upon the Royal British Nurses' Association. These criticisms we shall proceed to make good, but let us first say that we do not in this connection make any complaint of Miss Nightingale herself. She has long looked upon the active world from the distance which a sick-room interposes between the sufferer and those who toil. But with regard to the substance of the letter, it is written ostensibly to set forth three points which are of public importance "to prevent misunderstanding and to avoid misconstruction." The three important points are that (1) registered Nurses will obtain no professional privilege by registration; (2) the list will have nothing in common with the registers of the medical or other professions; (3) registered Nurses will have no right to

use the title "registered Nurse." Taking these in order, there may in the first objection be some intended subtlety in the use of the word "privilege," which strictly means an advantageous position before the law. If so, it is a sufficient answer to say that no Nurse desires or stands in need of any professional *privilege* whatever. The practice of Nursing is perfectly open and unfettered by the law. Unlike the practice of medicine or surgery, it is not prohibited to anybody, and there is therefore no room for *privilege*, in the strict sense of the word, in reference to its exercise. But what Nurses have been united for in the Royal British Nurses' Association are professional *advantages*, and these they do secure, and will in the future secure in increasing proportion from the connection. There is no reasonable room for doubt that the status of British Nurses will be raised, their efficiency increased, and their social position and emoluments enhanced by incorporation into a professional body, any more than there is reasonable ground for mistake as to the great step which has been made in these directions by the founding of the Association and the work which it has already accomplished. The second statement is even more manifestly at variance with the facts than is the first. The list, which is declared to have "nothing in common" with the medical register, is described in the Charter "as setting forth the names and addresses of Nurses, with the names of the Hospitals or Institutions at which they have been trained and the length of training which each has received, thus enabling the public to form a more accurate judgment of the professional education and experience of the Nurses so registered." Now the Medical Register is published under the provisions of an Act of Parliament which in its preamble recites that "it is expedient that persons requiring medical aid should be enabled to distinguish qualified from unqualified practitioners," and which in furtherance of this object creates machinery for the annual publication of a register in which the names, addresses, and qualifications of registered practitioners appear. There could not be a closer analogy than between these two registers. Differences, and important differences, of course there are, but these need not now detain us, for the parallel is not of our drawing, and we do not propose to elaborate it, but it is astonishing to find that a number of distinguished people can append their names to such baseless and pointless allegations as this that the new Nurses' Register has "nothing in common with the registers of the medical or other professions." The third point made is hardly even intelligible. That a Nurse who is on the Register of Nurses will have no right to use the title of "registered Nurse" appears to us to be a paradox pure and simple. Who would have the right to object to her so describing herself, or who would have any jurisdiction to enforce the objection, if advanced, we are not told, and in the meantime the Charter itself, to which appeal is made, speaks of the Nurses on the list of members as the "Nurses so registered." In fact, an observation such as this does not even challenge examination. It must have been made wholly without reflection, and when considered even by itself, and apart from any views of the facts, it refutes itself. We have now placed before our readers our grounds for speaking of this as a contribution not helpful to the discussion. We have also described it as not timely, and that because the Charter having now been granted and the Association installed in the position which was so long and so strenuously disputed, it is plainly a matter of public interest that it should be left free to do as best it can the duty committed to its hands. Since the above was written we have received an effective rejoinder by the executive of the Royal British Nurses' Association to the attack made on them.

S. G.

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