

causing the gravest discredit to the whole nursing profession. To remedy these undoubted evils, Mrs. Bedford Fenwick suggested the formation of a union, to be termed the British Nurses' Association; that it should seek as soon as possible to obtain a Royal Charter, so as to weld nurses together into a corporate body with powers of self-discipline and mutual assistance; that a Register of Trained Nurses should be commenced, and that as soon as possible an Act of Parliament to legalise and nationalise this system should be obtained. By this means, not only would the education of nurses be improved and systematised, but proper discipline and control would be exercised over the members of the calling, and the public would be enabled to distinguish between a woman who was thoroughly trained and trustworthy, and a woman who possessed neither of those qualifications.

It is a painful fact that the greatest and most bitter opposition, was made to this scheme of professional improvement, and public protection. There were unfortunately great hospitals which sent out to the public semi-trained probationers as thoroughly trained nurses, paying them small salaries because of their ignorance, but charging the public large fees on the ground that their services were thoroughly skilled; and

so utilising the public confidence in their good faith, for the purpose of making a profit of many hundreds of pounds a year. The bad example and custom permeated through many nursing institutions, for the most part managed as private speculations by laymen, and was productive of the gravest consequences to the sick. Institutions which followed this practice, were naturally averse to the introduction of a public

Register upon which the names of their untrained workers would not of course appear, and which would therefore bring about the loss of their illicit profits. Then again, the authorities of some hospitals which did not descend to such practices were keenly jealous of their rights and privileges, and openly fearful of any infringement of, or interference with, their power over their nursing subordinates. So the latter joined with the former in issuing pamphlets, and publishing



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manifestoes, against the British Nurses' Association. In many instances, the nurses were forbidden to join, or even to give their tacit support to the Association, and no means were left untried to intimidate those who had joined its ranks, by telling them that their programme was impossible of fulfilment, that it was doomed to failure, and that it could only result in injury to themselves.

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