

increased, when for the first time, physicians and surgeons obtained assistants whose higher education and sense of duty made it certain that their directions would be accurately understood and executed.

During the years from 1878 to 1888, the greatest improvements were therefore made in the nursing departments of most large Hospitals throughout the Kingdom. Lady probationers were admitted either by payment, or at reduced salaries, on the consideration that they should receive systematic instruction in the details of nursing; and so gentlewomen were encouraged to undertake nursing as a definite professional occupation. Then the growth of the profession naturally led, as it has always done in every other calling, to a demand for professional union and organization. It was keenly recognised to be a grave discredit to well-trained nurses that any woman however destitute she might be of knowledge, or of character, or of both, could still term herself a nurse, could obtain employment in that capacity, and be entrusted with the lives of the sick. Frequent scandals, in which such so-called nurses not only endangered the safety of their patients by their ignorance or incapacity, but also disappeared from houses into which they had gained admission in professional guise—with all the portable property they could seize—caused leading members of the nursing profession at last to determine that means must be taken to protect both the sick and the nursing profession from those who disgraced the calling.

In 1887, the British Nurses' Association was therefore founded, by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, with the objects of uniting nurses in the membership of a recognized profession, and providing for their registration on terms satisfactory to physicians and surgeons; and thus to purify the profession, and to protect the sick as far as possible against the inefficient and the discreditable. The Association met with the keenest and most bitter opposition, especially from those who, for personal or pecuniary reasons, desired to keep the public in ignorance as to the education received by private nurses, or to prevent reforms in the nursing profession. One journal especially made itself conspicuous by the violence of its opposition to the Association, going so far as to express the opinion that employers of nurses should refuse the services of those who were connected with the Association, who were attacked week

by week, and month by month. It published, for example, an anonymous letter describing the members of the Association as "the scum of the Nursing profession," and "women who joined it to obtain pseudo-respectability." When called to account for this vituperation, the Editor only expressed his opinion that it was "fair criticism." Pamphlets were published against the Association, and a Committee was formed of various hospital authorities and medical men to watch its proceedings, and to prevent, if possible, its progress. The Association, however, steadily advanced in numbers and in influence; but so great was the animosity against it that when it applied to the Board of Trade to be registered as a Limited Liability Company, without adding the word Limited to its name—a privilege provided for by Act of Parliament in the case of such bodies—the most virulent opposition was raised, and the Board of Trade refused its consent to this simple privilege. The Association then wisely applied to Her Majesty the Queen in Council for a Royal Charter, and, despite the strongest opposition, so conclusively proved the value of its work and its public usefulness, that a Charter was granted to it. By this means, Nursing in the United Kingdom, for the first time, became recognised as a distinct profession, and nurses obtained definite rights and privileges of co-operation for their mutual aid and assistance, and for the advancement of their calling. As we shall show next week, this movement brought about immense improvements in the organization of nurses in this country, and in their system of education, which have been reflected in the inauguration of similar movements in other parts of the world.

But the first points which it will be useful to emphasize are that the history of this movement—which was well summarised in the pamphlet entitled "The Victory of the Nurses," published in 1893—once more exhibits the bitterness with which all reforms and professional improvements are opposed by those who are interested in maintaining abuses; and in the next place that the dogged perseverance of even a few determined people—especially if they are sustained by an earnest conviction of the justice of their cause—is always rewarded by success in the end. In this particular crusade, the difficulties were very great, and those who actively worked for reform were few in numbers, but they achieved a complete triumph.

*(To be continued.)*

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