

FACILIS EST DESCENSUS AVERNI.

It is a significant fact that while during the period that the nurse-members had large powers of self-government the Association was self-supporting, and, consequently, self-respecting; it has under male management lost its professional aspirations, and is now merely a society kept afloat by charitable subscriptions. The lack of appreciation of any professional standing was quickly demonstrated by the hon. officers. In 1899 the publication of the Register ceased, and a Roll of Members was substituted. Later, without the consent of the members, and quite unjustifiably in relation to the powers conferred by the Charter, a new appendix was inserted, for which Mr. E. A. Fardon is responsible, giving a list of members who had obtained certificates qualifying them to act as midwives—an expensive as well as an illegal and unnecessary departure, as we pointed out at the time. This brings the history of the Register up to the present year.

WANT OF CONFIDENCE.

Year by year the employment of methods which they could not approve has alienated the sympathy and interest of the older members. Hundreds have ceased to pay their annual subscriptions, and thus have refused to support Sir James Crichton Browne, Mr. E. A. Fardon, Dr. Bezly Thorne, Dr. Comyns Berkeley, and other medical autocrats, who have shown themselves absolutely out of sympathy with the aspirations of the modern, intelligent, trained nurse in their unbusinesslike, unsympathetic, and domineering control of the nurses' affairs. This loss of financial support has at last caused the hon. officers to realise that economies must be practised if the Association is to continue to exist at all, and the first asset which these gentlemen propose to sacrifice is the only tangible benefit which the nurses at present enjoy. Having, as we have already shown, degraded the Register of Trained Nurses by converting it into a Roll of Members of the R.B.N.A., they now propose to injure the Roll and to render it useless and futile by the following method:—

THE ALTERATIONS PROPOSED.

In considering the alterations proposed, or, as the official organ of the Association announces, "decided" upon, we must remember that originally the Register contained a single list, that of Trained Nurses, with their addresses, date of registration, and qualifications.

In 1898 the form of the Register was altered, and in 1899, the first compiled after the new Bye-Laws had come into force, it was issued as a Roll of Members. To this was added—presumably at the nurses' expense—a list of the names and addresses of medical members, Mr. Fardon's notorious list of midwives, and last, and apparently least in the opinion of the hon. medical officers, a list of nurses registered by the Corporation under Clause 4 of the Charter.

It is now proposed—

1. In the list of nurse-members to delete their addresses, thus depriving both nurses and the public of the essential benefit conferred upon them.
2. No alteration is proposed in the list of medical members. There is no more significant proof of the estimation in which the nurses are held by the hon. medical officers than the fact that, while they do not scruple to deprive the nurses of the advantages of their own Register for which they pay, they do not propose to deprive their own colleagues of this advertisement.
3. In Appendix A, the list of nurses registered by the Association, for which privilege they have paid, both addresses and qualifications are to be deleted.
4. In Appendix B, the list of midwives; only the names are to be printed.

THE RIGHTS OF THE NURSE-MEMBERS.

We are of opinion that these drastic alterations in the form of Registration cannot be legally made without the consent of the Corporation in General Meeting assembled.

The Royal Charter, under the heading "Purposes and Powers of the Corporation," provides for

"The maintenance and publication of a list of persons who may have applied to the Corporation to have their names entered therein as Nurses, and whom the Corporation may think fit to enter therein from time to time, coupled with such information about each person so entered as to the Corporation may from time to time seem desirable."

It is therefore obvious that it behoves the Executive Committee to submit this most important matter to a general meeting of members, before ruthlessly and cruelly depriving British nurses of the last vestige of professional advantage which they receive under the Royal Charter granted to them by the Sovereign in Council.

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