

## Meeting at the Board of Trade.

On Friday, May 5th, the Board of Trade afforded those who had opposed the application of the City Financiers for the Licence of the Board to incorporate as "The Incorporated Society for Promoting the Higher Education of Nurses" an opportunity of stating their objections.

The Societies represented were:—

The British Medical Association, represented by Sir Victor Horsley, Chairman of the Representative Meetings; Mr. Andrew Clark, President of the Council; Dr. Galton, Dr. Langley Browne, and Mr. Whitaker, Medical Secretary.

The British Gynaecological Society, represented by Dr. Bedford Fenwick.

The Midland Medical Society, represented by Dr. Langley Browne.

The Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland, represented by Mr. Swazzy.

The Royal British Nurses' Association, represented by Sir James Crichton Browne, Mr. John Langton, Dr. Bezly Thorne, Dr. Godson, Dr. Comyns Berkeley, and Mrs. Coster, the Nurse Hon. Secretary.

The Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses, represented by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick and Miss Mollett.

The Matrons' Council, represented by Miss Isla Stewart, President, and Miss M. Brea, Hon. Secretary.

The League of St. Bartholomew's Hospital Nurses, also represented by Miss Isla Stewart, President.

The Scottish Committee for Promoting the State Registration of Trained Nurses, represented by Miss K. Burleigh.

The Irish Nurses' Association, represented by Miss Huxley.

The Registered Nurses' Society, represented by Miss E. J. Hurlston, Miss Calderwood, and Miss Macpherson.

Miss E. C. Barton, Matron Chelsea Infirmary (Metropolitan Infirmary Matrons).

The Central Hospital Council for London, represented by The Hon. Sydney Holland and Mr. Charles Burt.

Miss Mackintosh, Assistant Matron, and another member of the London Hospital Nursing Staff were also present.

Mr. Barnes, Comptroller of the Companies' Department, presided. Mr. Cosmo Bonsor, Treasurer of Guy's, was the only signatory present, and the following promoters:—Miss Swift, Matron of Guy's, Miss C. J. Wood, Sir Henry Burdett, and Miss Maule, of the Midwives' Institute.

In opening the proceedings, the Chairman stated that an immense number of objections had been received to the scheme—a pile of these, about a foot high, was on the table at his side—and the President of the Board of Trade thought it only just and right that these objections which appeared so important to those who advanced them should be heard in detail. At the same time he thought that there was some misconception as to the powers of the Board. He explained section 23 of the Companies Act, 1867, under which the Board of Trade could refuse to allow the Society to incorporate without the word limited. This was the Board's only power, as it was open to the promoters to incorporate with the addition of the word

Limited, or as an unlimited company. They had, however, preferred to apply to the Board for the right to incorporate without the word limited.

Many of the objectors had pointed out the hardship involved to nurses in being placed under the control of the proposed Society. It was, however, purely voluntary and relied on its own merits to induce nurses to join it. No authority would be conferred upon it by the Board. In conclusion, the Chairman stated that a shorthand note of the proceedings would be taken and submitted to Lord Salisbury, the President of the Board of Trade. The opposition were then invited to state their case.

### THE ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION.

For the Royal British Nurses' Association, Sir James Crichton Browne said that from its inception it had had great aims as to improving the profession of nursing, and would welcome the co-operation of any Society which it considered would help in that good work. It was because the Association was convinced that the Society was injurious to its interests that it appeared in opposition to the application, which appeared both inopportune and a gratuitous and unnecessary encroachment on the work of the Association, not only so, but it was vicious in principle. Two Bills for the Registration of Nurses were now before the House. Had such a measure become law the irresponsible and rival Society would have been strangled in its cradle. Was it expedient that legal status should be given to this Society, whose object appeared to be to steal a march upon the registrationists, so as to obtain, before the legislation which all hoped and believed was inevitable, that status which they could not afterwards hope to gain?

The speaker also drew the attention of the Board of Trade to the reply given to the British Nurses' Association in 1891. He proposed that consideration of the application should be postponed until after the Select Committee of the House of Commons appointed to inquire into the expediency of the Registration of Nurses had reported to the House, and that if the applicants subsequently applied again to the Board of Trade they should, like the Royal British Nurses' Association, be referred to the Privy Council. If this new Society were launched at the present time confusion would be worse confounded, and the British public still more bewildered. Further, its constitution was vicious in principle, and contrary to sound policy. The provisions of the scheme were not easy to understand, being clothed in the verbiage of the Stock Exchange, but it was manifestly an attempt on the part of a body of laymen to capture and exploit the nursing profession. No doubt they believe the movement was for the benefit of nurses. But what did they know of nursing? With equal knowledge and with equal modesty they might attempt to examine electrical engineers. Such a scheme was not a bit less preposterous than the present one. Unqualified nurses were a great danger to the public, but it would be a still greater danger if unqualified persons were allowed to undertake their examination and control. The signatories were very much mistaken if they thought that nurses would now put themselves exclusively under lay control. Nevertheless, pressure could be brought to bear upon nurses by their training-schools, of which the applicants were liberal supporters, to join the Society, and a kind of stigma might be placed upon them if they did not do so. All of us were liable to err at times.

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