

The brunt of all the contest fell upon Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, and it will be understood in future times by the Nursing profession—when the history of this movement comes to be written—that despite the personal and professional attacks to which she was exposed, she never for one moment faltered or turned aside from the goal she had determined to reach. The Association steadily grew in numbers and steadily prospered. It published the first Register of Trained Nurses in 1891. It was granted by the Queen the title of "Royal," and shortly afterwards applied to the Board of Trade for a licence to omit the word "Limited," if it were incorporated under the Companies' Acts, a trifling privilege to which any Society not trading for profits is entitled, and which is usually granted as a matter of course. The enemies of the Association, however, so bitterly opposed the grant of this nominal privilege, that the Board of Trade peremptorily refused the request of the Association, without even affording the members the elementary right of a hearing on their own behalf. The Association therefore applied to Her Majesty the Queen in the following year, for a Royal Charter, and this was granted in 1893, after a careful inquiry before the Privy Council, at which many hospitals and institutions entered their final and powerful opposition. The Charter incorporated the Association and gave it wide powers to work for the benefit of nurses. Difficulties have arisen since from the action of certain medical members opposed to professional progress and organisation for nurses, which so far has prevented the nurses reaping the full benefits granted to them in their Royal Charter, but it is to be hoped that in the near future this obstructive and ungenerous policy will be overcome.

The system of Registration of nurses has slowly advanced in popular estimation, and a systematic effort is about to be made to obtain an Act of Parliament which shall place the Registration system under State sanction and control. Then the crown will have been placed upon the recent progress of nursing, and its future advance will depend upon the gradual improvements which will be introduced into the methods of nurses' education; while so far as their subsequent employment is concerned, there should be little doubt that their profession being controlled by State authority, nurses will be enabled to work almost entirely on the co-operative system—that is to say, to obtain their own earnings less the small discount necessary to cover the office expenses of their organisation. It is the earnest hope of all who take an interest in their profession, that the first Nursing Act of Parliament may soon be produced. It is felt

that it would be most appropriate that the nineteenth century, which has witnessed the rise of nursing as a profession, should not end without the full accomplishment being reached of this great work, in the foundation of the calling on a secure and settled basis, and the final development of nursing into a profession recognised and regulated by the State. It would certainly be most fit that the signature to such an Act should be given by the great and good Queen who has done more than any other Sovereign to foster the development of the Art of Nursing and to bring its practical benefits into the homes of the humblest of her subjects.

There are various important lessons underlying the rise and progress of the nursing profession which have been so briefly, and therefore imperfectly, described; and a few words on these points will not be out of place. Nursing represents the immense strides which have been made by women during the Victorian era. It proves what admirable work women can do for the State if they are encouraged—it might almost be said permitted—to utilize their physical and mental powers for the benefit of the public at large as well as for the happiness and welfare of their individual families. In fact, Nursing was the first step taken by educated gentlewomen into a broader and more national work than they had ever before essayed, in this or any other country. And the indisputable motive was that women during the last half century have exhibited a deeper sense of their individual responsibilities than ever before. They have risen to those responsibilities, although in doing so they first incurred ridicule and opprobrium, and have ever since been compelled to relinquish much of the pleasantness, ease, and luxury which they might otherwise have enjoyed. It must be remembered that Nursing was the pioneer, as it must always be one of the best and highest professions for women. The example of nurses has undoubtedly led other women to undertake public work as Guardians of the Poor, Members of School Boards, and in other capacities, in which their knowledge of domestic details has proved to be of incalculable advantage to everyone concerned. The subject is too wide to discuss further in this place. Suffice it to say that nursing has maintained its pioneer position by being the first profession of women which has been recognised by Royal Charters; both the Jubilee Institute and the Royal British Nurses' Association having been so incorporated during the last ten years.

MARGARET BREAY.

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