

A strong resolution was drafted, and carried unanimously, condemning the action of the Council of the Association, and with one or two exceptions every Matron resigned. As can be imagined, these secessions produced a sensation, and in a letter, in our possession, Dr. Steele, then Medical Superintendent of Guy's Hospital, wrote:—"Burdett is running about the town tearing his hair, and complaining that he is very ill-used; he says Mrs. Feawick is no woman of business, and Miss Wood is so ill-tempered that no one can work with her."

In December of that year, Dr. Steele read a paper on the Registration of Nurses, which will be found in the *Hospital* newspaper in December, 1887. At that meeting Mrs. Bedford Fenwick proposed that the question of the Registration of Nurses should be submitted direct to the General Medical Council, and should not be carried out through the Hospitals' Association. This was carried by the casting vote of the Chairman; but on a further amendment, proposed by Dr. Steele, it was agreed that the Hospitals' Association should draw up the scheme. The danger of placing the profession of nursing in the hands of this exceedingly unrepresentative Association resulted in the formation of the British Nurses' Association, composed principally of trained nurses, who, in conjunction with physicians and surgeons, associated themselves together for professional purposes, the main object being to obtain the State Registration of Trained Nurses.

#### THE BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION.

The formation of this Association was the signal for the inauguration of ten years of misrepresentation and persecution on the part of Sir Henry Burdett, through his newspaper, the *Hospital*, and otherwise, of those women who dared to form an independent opinion concerning their own affairs.

Here is a sample, taken from the Editorial in the *Hospital* newspaper of December 31st, 1887, entitled "Home Rule for Nurses," in which the writer makes a most rabid attack upon the founders of the British Nurses' Association, and says:—

"Should this Home Rule movement be forced to the front, the managers of hospitals and nursing institutions throughout the country might be compelled in self-defence to enact that no member of their staff shall become a member of the new Association"—an incitement to Hospital Committees to tyrannize over their nurses, which, we regret to say, was acted upon in more than one instance.

Sir Henry Burdett next attempted to intimidate trained nurses themselves from quite justifiably co-operating in a professional Association by holding individual members up to public opprobrium, and although they had a Royal President (Princess Christian), these women were described in his paper

as "the scum of the nursing profession" and "women of *pseudo* respectability."

Neither did he hesitate to attack these working women by name, as the following quotation from the *Hospital* newspaper of May 24th, 1890, under the heading "The *Elite* of the Profession," will prove:—

"In January last a hospital Matron wrote to us giving certain particulars with regard to a Miss Gertrude Johnstone, who had decamped from Teignmouth Infirmary, leaving the Committee considerably in debt. In our issue for February 8th we warned all hospital authorities against this Miss Johnstone, and at the same time we looked her up in the British Nurses' Association list, and there the name appeared. A fortnight ago, further information with regard to Miss Johnstone reached us, and we went to Guy's Hospital, with which she said she was connected, but where we found she was utterly unknown. Then curiosity and that happy phrase about the *elite* tempted us to call at the British Nurses' Association office, and try to find out whether they had any idea where Miss Johnstone was trained (if ever!), or whether they simply never inquired into the references given by would-be members. Ignorance reigned supreme at the British Nurses' Association office; the clerk, who was the only person forthcoming, knew nothing. Then a letter to the Secretary elicited the fact that Miss Gertrude Johnstone was among the 800 *elite* who had applied for Registration, and the Secretary requested further information about her. But we do not consider it our duty to make inquiries for the B.N.A. If they cannot even discover such a noted case as this Miss Johnstone's, which appeared both in the local and London Press, we really cannot undertake their work for them; we do not grudge them their *elite*, nor do we wish a single name struck off their Register."

The truth was that the Miss Gertrude Johnstone who was a member of the British Nurses' Association, and the nurse to whom the *Hospital* newspaper referred, were totally different women; the former held a certificate from a good training-school, and had had a most honourable career, which has continued to this day.

It was immediately pointed out to Sir Henry Burdett that the Miss Gertrude Johnstone who was a member of the Association, and who had thus been so wrongfully maligned, was a totally different person from the nurse to whom his remarks referred, and who was not, and had never been, connected with the Association. It is perhaps needless to add that Sir Henry Burdett neither apologised for, nor even retracted the wanton attack made by his paper upon a defenceless woman.

#### SIR HENRY AS AN ANTI-REGISTRATIONIST.

From this time forward Sir Henry Burdett associated himself with the reactionary party, and his paper was freely used by Mr. Bonham Carter, Secretary of the Nightingale Fund, and others for the expression of opposition to any form of Registration for trained nurses, so that the attempt of the Hospitals' Association to register nurses signally failed. The work was consequently undertaken

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