

by the Royal British Nurses' Association, which in 1891 issued its first Register.

In 1891 Sir Henry Burdett gave evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Metropolitan Hospitals, and utilised the occasion to strongly oppose the State Registration of Trained Nurses. He handed in to this Committee:—

1. The Memorial of Nurse-Training Schools and Hospitals against State Registration.
2. A Petition from Physicians and Surgeons.
3. The copy of a speech by Mr. Rathbone, M.P., on behalf of the Nightingale Training-School for Nurses, incorporating the views of Miss Nightingale in opposition to Registration.

In the course of his evidence he informed the Lords Committee that Registration "gives a bogus complexion to an untrained nurse, and makes the public liable to believe that she is trained when she is not." He said further:—

"All I have to say is that the subject of Registration is in a nutshell. You have at present Registration in regard to all nurses adequately trained—that is to say, nearly every nurse's training-school keeps a register of its nurses,* and issues a certificate to all who have had three years' service. Well, if the public want to know if a nurse is trained they have only to ask her to produce her certificate from her nurse-training school. . . . If they are dissatisfied with the nurse they can write to the Matron of the school where she was trained, and then the Matron will go into her case, and if necessary will call up the nurse and deal with it. So the public really have adequate protection in that way. The contention is that they have not; and, in order to put things right, an outside body, which has nothing to do with the training of nurses, proposes to issue, and indeed has issued, a certificate to such nurses as it pleases to arbitrarily select, these nurses paying a maximum of 10s. per head for the privilege. So that it happens that I have seen the case of a nurse who did not get a certificate at her hospital, because she was discharged for having in her possession the property of a probationer, and so her certificate was refused, who now goes out as a trained nurse with Prince's Christian's name to a certificate as her authority for representing herself to be an honest and capable nurse, when in reality she is not.† I consider that to be a very great evil, and so do the nurses' training-schools, for which the Royal British Nurses' Association is alone responsible."

Sir Henry Burdett further told the Committee:—"I do not think I need trouble you any further on this question of nurse registration, because practically the question is dead. . . . The hospitals themselves took it up, and were rather smitten with

the idea at first; but the Hospitals' Association examined it carefully, and they found that for practical purposes it would be harmful rather than beneficial."

THE BOARD OF TRADE AND REGISTRATION.

When the trained nurses had proved that they appreciated the opportunity of co-operation afforded by the Royal British Nurses' Association, and its members numbered about 3,000, the Association in the year 1891 applied to the Board of Trade for powers of Incorporation, with the omission of the word Limited, so as to give more solidarity to the Association.

To this petition Sir Henry Burdett aroused every possible opposition, with the object of preventing the Association from obtaining this privilege. Eventually the Board of Trade refused the application, and advised the Association to apply to the Privy Council for an inquiry, when such action would receive the support of the Board of Trade. The grounds of its refusal were:—

"It appears to the Board of Trade that they are not competent to determine the very important questions connected with the establishment of a Register of nurses, which should be settled before the Register can be effectively established. Some of these questions are of great weight.

"Under these circumstances the Board of Trade are unable to grant the desired licence to the Royal British Nurses' Association. They wish it to be distinctly understood that they are led to this decision by no hostile feeling towards the Association or its objects, but by a conviction that full inquiry (by competent authorities) into all the facts and circumstances of the case, and into the objections that have been raised, should precede any further steps on the part of Her Majesty's Government."

It is a significant illustration of Sir Henry Burdett's tactics, that while opposing the Registration of Nurses through the Royal British Nurses' Association, and loudly proclaiming his unanimity with those training-schools which opposed Registration root and branch, he caused to be incorporated in the provisions of the Royal National Pension Fund—which was and is only an insurance society for nurses—a clause giving it power to deal with the Registration of Trained Nurses.

THE ROYAL CHARTER.

Acting upon the admirable suggestion of the Board of Trade, the Royal British Nurses' Association appealed to the Privy Council, and asked for incorporation by Royal Charter. This brings us up to the year 1892. Again, Sir Henry Burdett used every effort to incite the training-schools to oppose this justifiable demand; but the Privy Council, after an exhaustive inquiry, during which both sides were heard, granted the Royal British Nurses' Association a Royal Charter in 1893.

We feel sure that all just-minded people will agree that the Association, having gained these powers, should have been left in peace to work out the

* This was absolutely untrue.—Ed.

† This nurse was most unjustly discharged from the London Hospital.—Ed.

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