

organisation of the Nursing Profession. But what do we find? By slow and sure degrees outside influence was brought to bear upon the more reactionary medical element on the Executive Committee, and a systematic policy of opposition to all the just demands of the Founders and Matrons on the Association for the benefit of the nurses was pursued, and internecine friction was fanned from outside.

The faithful Secretary was attacked by this party until her father was compelled to complain of her treatment. Her resignation was the signal to hand over the management of the office to those inimical to the very foundation principles of the Association.

The courage and persistency of those Matrons who refused to support the Medical Honorary Officers is now a matter of history. It is written in back numbers of this journal, and is, therefore, on record for all time.

THE BETRAYAL OF THE R.B.N.A.

In January, 1896, the British Medical Association, which in the previous year had unanimously passed a resolution in favour of the principle of State Registration for Nurses, convened a Conference between its Parliamentary Bills Committee and representatives of nurse-training schools and nursing societies. Very few representative persons were present, but the Chairman, the late Mr. Ernest Hart, read to the meeting a communication from a limited number of training-schools in which a Resolution was incorporated which had recently been adopted at a meeting at St. Thomas's Hospital at which Sir Henry Burdett was present.

The resolution was as follows:—

"That this meeting of representatives of certain metropolitan nursing institutions and nurses' training-schools, having heard the resolution of the British Medical Association, which is thus cited, reaffirm the position hitherto taken up by them that a legal system of registration of nurses is inexpedient in principle, injurious to the best interests of nurses, and of doubtful public benefit, and failing to recognise in the document circulated by the British Medical Association any reasons for altering their opinion, decline to enter on further discussion of the subject."

Sir Henry Burdett was also present and took an active part in this Conference, voting in conjunction with his friends Mr. E. A. Fardon and Miss Henrietta Wedgwood, of the Royal British Nurses' Association, for the following resolution, which was carried by their votes:—

"That a legal system of Registration of Nurses is inexpedient in principle and injurious to the best interests of Nurses, and of doubtful public benefit."

It was this action on the part of an official, and of a representative of an Association formed to obtain State Registration which caused the upheaval in the Royal British Nurses' Association, which continued until 1897, when the autocratic honorary officers

were able—largely through the vote of nurses under their control, and in the employ of institutions with which they were connected—to thrust through new Bye-Laws, under which it was useless for self-respecting women to continue their membership of the Association. For the time being the anti-registrationists had captured the Association, formed for the benefit of nurses, and used it against their interests.

THE VITALITY OF THE MOVEMENT.

But although Sir Henry Burdett swore before the Lords Committee that Registration was **dead**, it was and is very much alive. The Matrons who seceded from the R.B.N.A. found free scope for their public work for nurses in the Matrons' Council, out of which has arisen the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses, which has a membership of about 1,500, and which, in spite of opposition on the part of the officials of the more reactionary nurse-training schools, is doing a splendid work in educating the public. It has drafted a Bill for the State Registration of Nurses, which was introduced into the House of Commons last Session, and which provides for the Direct Representation of Trained Nurses on their Governing Body. It is owing to the action of this Society that a Select Committee of the House of Commons was appointed last Session to consider the expediency of providing for the Registration of Nurses. It is practically certain that this Committee will be reappointed next Session, and the whole question of the Registration of nurses by the State is therefore at present *sub judice*.

AN INOCCIDENT MOMENT.

The present moment is thus most inopportune to launch a new voluntary registration scheme, even were it a well-advised one. Further, voluntary registration has been tried, and has been found wanting. The scheme of the Hospitals' Association died in embryo, the scheme of the Royal British Nurses' Association was wrecked by wire-pulling, and it is apparent to those who have given most thought to the subject that a system under the authority of the State can alone be effective. The interests involved are too diverse, the nurses cannot be adequately protected in any other way, and perhaps, most important of all, no voluntary system can touch the class of nurse whom it is necessary in the public interest to bring under discipline and control. They would not register with any voluntary association.

This short *résumé* of the politics of State Registration must convince every unprejudiced person that the conduct of Sir Henry Burdett on this question of the Registration of Nurses has been consistently obstructive. Under a Council on which he was all-powerful, he advocated a system of Registration which its Nursing Committee repudiated; his

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