

# THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED  
THE NURSING RECORD

EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,078.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1908.

Vol. XLI.

## Editorial.

### JUBILEE OF THE GENERAL MEDICAL COUNCIL.

The Autumn Session of the General Medical Council, which began on Tuesday, was memorable as coinciding with the beginning of the second half century of the existence of the Council itself. In a most interesting leading article, *The Times* of the 24th inst. summarised the work which has been accomplished by the Council, and "the extent and character of its influence upon the great profession, the scattered elements of which it was formed to co-ordinate, and in some degree to control." This summary is at the present time most instructive and illuminating to nurses who are striving for the co-ordination of the members of their own profession through a "General Council for the Registration of Nurses in the United Kingdom." Our contemporary shows that when the Council was established by the Medical Act of 1858, practitioners of medicine and surgery were examined and licensed in each division of the United Kingdom by independent corporations, "some of them Universities, conferring degrees, others colleges, conferring diplomas or licences, but all alike entitled to fix their own standards of qualification, and in no way subject to any kind of superior authority . . . the primary object of the Medical Act was to terminate this chaotic state of things." This was done by creating a central organisation by which the issue of licences by the various licensing bodies might be controlled, and on which each licensing corporation appointed a representative, in addition to the representatives of the Crown. It was not until after an amending Act had been passed in 1886 that any representatives of the Council were appointed by the votes of medical practitioners.

Great things were hoped of the Council

when it was first established, but it became apparent as time went on that its powers were very limited, and "for many years the Council was systematically abused for doing things which the law directed it to do, and even more fiercely for not doing things which its critics thought desirable, but for which the Legislature had given it no powers."

Our contemporary proceeds to point out that—

"It was one of the results of the disappointment thus created that an agitation was set on foot for the admission into the Council of members independent alike of the Crown and of the corporations, and directly elected by the medical profession. For this demand, having regard to the duties to be performed, there was no basis in principle; but it was, nevertheless, and on the whole very wisely, conceded by the Legislature. The chief effect of the concession has been that, just as the gathering together of the corporation representatives, charged mainly with the duty of harmonising the requirements of their constituent bodies, and of the Crown representatives, charged mainly with the protection of the public with regard to the "sufficiency" of medical education, has had the effect of producing practically complete harmony as to the conditions under which licences should be conferred, so the participation of the direct representatives in the general work of the Council has led to a more elevated conception of ethics on the part of the profession generally, and to the practically universal acceptance of a high and steadily rising standard of duty and conduct."

Thus the employment of unqualified assistants, "an evil custom which was widely prevalent, and which greatly hindered the skilful treatment of disease amongst the poor," has been abolished,

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