

Sisters, and assuming entire responsibility for the Matron's action in ignoring precedent; the Acting Treasurer, Mr. G. Acton Davis, a member of the Central Hospital Council for London, informing them that the Committee had unanimously decided to refuse the request, and had inserted a resolution on the minutes, prohibiting meetings in the hospital for the discussion of controversial subjects.

The fact was that, so long as that resolution remained on the minutes unrescinded, liberty of conscience and free speech were specifically denied to the nurses within the gates at this public institution, and not only a great professional but moral injury was inflicted upon them.

The Committee had publicly assumed responsibility for the grievance complained of. The resolution of protest would therefore deal with its action, and not that of the Matron, who had been considered primarily to blame. Mrs. Fenwick then called upon Miss E. B. Kingsford to propose the resolution.

THE RESOLUTION.

Miss Kingsford proposed the following resolution:—

"That this Meeting learns with indignation and regret that the Committee of St. Bartholomew's Hospital have deliberately forbidden the Nursing Staff to meet and discuss in the Hospital a matter of the deepest importance to their profession and to themselves, viz.: the Registration of Nurses by Act of Parliament, thus depriving them of the much esteemed privilege of free speech, previously unquestioned.

"This Meeting recalls the facts that this movement for the improvement of Nursing education, and for the protection of the sick public against incompetent and criminal women, who can now practise as nurses without let or hindrance, has the support of the large majority of the medical profession in the United Kingdom:—that it has been fully considered for two Sessions by a Select Committee of the House of Commons, which unanimously recommended legislation for the purpose;—that a Bill to provide for Nurses' Registration was, in 1908, considered by the House of Lords, and finally passed through every stage with the cordial consent of both sides of that House;—that this Bill has been for 9 years introduced into the House of Commons, and backed and warmly supported by every section and party in that House;—and that within the last 20 years Acts for the Registration of Nurses have been enforced in many British Colonies, in 34 of the United States of America, in the German Empire, and in Belgium to the great improvement of nursing, and the consequent welfare of the sick.

"This Meeting claims that the Nurses employed by Hospitals are not thereby dispossessed of the elementary rights of British Subjects, and indignantly denies the right of Lord Sandhurst, the

Treasurer, and the Committee of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, to deprive the nurses of that institution of their inalienable right to freely discuss matters of supreme interest and importance to themselves and to their profession, and calls upon the Governors of St. Bartholomew's Hospital to expunge from the minutes of that institution, the record of a decision, upon the part of the Committee, as injurious to the reputation and interests of the charity, as it is ungenerous towards its Nursing Staff.

"Moreover, this Meeting confidently appeals to the public and the press to support trained nurses in protesting against such intolerable injustice."

Miss Kingsford said that she knew many would like to be entrusted with this duty whose hands were tied, so she voiced the righteous indignation which many felt. As a nurse she had never received a greater insult than when she learnt that the Committee of her old Training School had refused to allow the nurses to hold a meeting at the hospital to discuss the question of Nurses' Registration. Nothing which any members of the Society could do was too much to emphasise the expression of their indignation. The work of nurses was for the betterment of the world and of humanity, and that they should not be permitted to meet and discuss a subject which affected their professional life at every point was monstrous. She could not find words to express what she thought about it. The whole episode made her realize more vividly than ever, how much Bart.'s nurses of former days owed to the sympathy and wisdom of the great Matron under whom they were trained.

The Resolution was seconded by Miss Margaret Breay, who endorsed all that Miss Kingsford had said, and added that it was inconceivable that the members of the nursing staff might not have a meeting in their own Home to discuss a Bill which had been before the House of Commons for nine years, and which had passed the House of Lords, and might at any time become law. It was a Bill which intimately affected every detail of their professional life; it was not only their right, but their duty, to discuss it. The position of nurses differed from that of most professional and industrial workers, inasmuch as they "lived in," and, as they worked for long hours, if they were to attend a meeting in any numbers it must be arranged, on the spot, at an hour when they could attend. She believed that when the facts became known the nurses would have the sympathy and support of every unbiassed person in the three kingdoms.

Miss Beatrice Kent, who supported the Resolution, said that free speech was a lawful thing. If it was an unlawful thing the Com-

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