

Nurses, the aims of which were identical with those of the British nurses to whom she was in opposition.

Having decided on her course of action, Miss Nightingale threw herself into the fray with her accustomed vigour, and from 1891-1893 the registration fight and the battle for the Royal Charter were "her main public preoccupation." When the application was made for the Royal Charter it was Princess Christian who petitioned the Queen. "This makes it awkward for us," said Mr. Rathbone to Miss Nightingale; "and undoubtedly it did. There were courtly personages even among Miss Nightingale's devoted adherents who were inclined to trim; and there were other persons, who, having never perhaps thought out the question, were predisposed to do as the Princess did."

Miss Nightingale, as well as taking public action, appealed privately to the Lord President of the Council, wrote various letters, memoranda, and statements, and enlisted support from the medical profession.

In a long letter to Sir Harry Verney, she entered into the proceedings before the Privy Council at length, ending with the P.S. :—"This trial will cost us £700 at least." Everyone knows that the Registrationists won their Charter, and that the opposition tried to minimize the victory, and were never content until they found "trimmers" within the official ranks of the Royal British Nurses' Association, who actually voted for a resolution in opposition to the principles for which the Association was founded, and that subsequently it wandered for seven years in the anti-registration wilderness.

It is regrettable that this chapter, in which several inaccuracies have been incorporated which should be corrected in a future edition, has had to be written.

At no distant date the inner history of the trained nurses' struggle for professional status, and just educational and economic conditions, will be given to the public, probably from documentary evidence in the possession of the Editor of this journal which has been accessible to few other persons.

In the meanwhile, not one word to detract from the stupendous genius of the woman who founded the Nursing Profession. Read her life, and emulate her courage and her passion for work well done.

A beautiful memorial to Florence Nightingale has been unveiled in the Church of Santa Croce, Florence, the Westminster Abbey of Italy.

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TRAINED NURSES.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

POOR LAW NURSING.

The Afternoon Session of the Annual Meeting of the National Council of Trained Nurses was held on November 27th at 11, Chandos Street, Cavendish Square, London, W., when the President, Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, was in the chair.

The first subject on the Agenda was the new draft Poor Law Institution (Nursing) Order, and was dealt with by Miss A. C. Gibson in a most interesting and able address.

Miss Gibson began by thanking the Council for affording her the opportunity of speaking about Poor Law Nursing as affected by the Order. She spoke of the large amount of good work to be done in connection with Poor Law Nursing, which, so far, had not attracted sufficient nurses, either numerically or of the kind worthy of it.

Most nurses knew that Poor Law nursing had been severely handicapped by the unsatisfactory relation of the Superintendent Nurse to the Workhouse Matron. She emphasised that this was not due to their relative social positions—and thought that harm had been done by laying emphasis on this point—but rather to the subjection of a skilled worker to unskilled authority.

The Local Government Board and Poor Law Authorities had never understood the importance of this in relation to the sick. It was better understood in regard to education, and many special arrangements were made for school children, and schoolmistresses had been given a position never accorded to the Superintendent Nurse, whose expert knowledge entitled her to be head in her own department. This question was the crux of the difficulty of Poor Law authorities in obtaining Superintendent Nurses, and good nurses sent to small Poor Law infirmaries usually either resigned or deteriorated.

Under the new Draft Order the Superintendent Nurse had the advantage of writing her own report for the Board of Guardians, but it had to be submitted to the Matron. The Nurse's journal should go direct to the committee. There was no definition of the powers of the Superintendent Nurse. It was true that in the technical nursing of the sick she was not to be interfered with, but there were other fruitful causes of friction. For instance, she had not control over the linen, and a typical instance of the practical result of this was given by Miss Gibson of a case in which the linen sent to the laundry had been returned to the nurse as not sufficiently soiled.

The Order of 1897 enjoined that with every staff of three nurses there should be a Superintendent Nurse. Now, a Head Nurse might be appointed, and the Matron, if a trained nurse, was to have full control in her wards. Neither Matron nor Head Nurse need be a certified

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)