

resign their membership. This the Association had patiently endured, but it had now become imperative that some decided step should be taken to enable it legally to receive and administer Trust Funds, as the Committee of such a Fund had expressed a wish to amalgamate with the Association. Those who had from the first opposed the Association, left no stone unturned to prevent the transfer to it of that Fund, first by attempting to discredit its officials, and now by opposing its incorporation.

He did not suppose that all who had taken a prominent part in this opposition had been made acquainted with the manner in which the Association had been opposed, nor with the true explanations of that opposition, nor with the reasons why it desired to be incorporated; but he thought it would have been more just and fair if these gentlemen before publicly opposing a union of working women, had first sought for some information of its side of the case.

Sir James Crichton Browne, at the same meeting, said that he had learnt that a meeting had been held at St. Thomas' Hospital, and found to his astonishment that it was called by the Treasurer of that institution for the purpose of passing resolutions adverse to the Association. One resolution, indeed, proposed the establishment of a Committee of Observation, to keep a sharp eye on the Association's wicked proceedings. But these proceedings were only part of the antagonism which had pursued the Association for a long time, and was evinced with greater strength than usual, because of its application to the Board of Trade to sanction its incorporation. The whole position, said Sir James Crichton Browne, might be summed up in a nut shell.

"Is nursing to be a free profession in this country, or is it to consist of a little series of close corporations in the shape of the Training Schools?"

Sir James Crichton Browne further drew attention to an objection advanced by the authorities of Guy's Hospital, that "any effort to test the candidates for registration must necessarily lead to discord, and injure the work of the Training Schools."

Sir James then proposed a resolution affirming the fact that the R.B.N.A. fulfilled the conditions required for incorporation under the 23rd Section of the Companies Act, which permits an Association formed for the purpose of promoting . . . charity, or any other useful object, to be registered with limited liability, without the addition of the word "Limited" to its name, and that the Association was entitled to be incorporated under this section.

The Resolution concluded:—

"And seeing that the authorities of Nurse Training Schools possess no control over nurses who are not in their service, this meeting fails to comprehend by what right a few representatives of these schools attempt to interfere with free subjects of Her Majesty the Queen, who may choose to enrol their names upon a Register of any description."

Mr. Brudenell Carter, in seconding the Resolution, said that the opposition to the movement came from a very tainted source, because, while the efforts of the Royal British Nurses' Association had been, and would be to the end, addressed to raise the status, to improve the education, and to increase the earnings of nurses, and to combine them for the mutual protection and support which members of the professions carried on by men had always found it necessary to secure for themselves, it was notorious that the Nurse Training Schools had never been conducted in the interests of nurses, but on a basis of totally different motives. It could not be said that the Training Schools had done anything for nurses beyond teaching them, and objections proceeding from these schools would be regarded with extreme scepticism by nurses and by the public.

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, supporting the resolution, which was carried unanimously, said that her experience as Matron of one of the largest Nurse Training Schools in the Kingdom, enabled her to affirm that the assertion of the opponents that hospital authorities had any sort of control over their departed employées was merely a preposterous assumption.

The Association, in accordance with custom, submitted its rules and proposed objects to the Board of Trade, and was directed to advertise the fact of its application for a license, and that until May 16th (1891) the Board would receive any notice of opposition to the application. Ten days before this period had expired the Association received a letter from the Board declining to permit it to omit the word "Limited" as desired, on the ground that considerable opposition to the Association had been expressed by influential persons. No information was afforded the Association as to the charges brought against it, nor the slightest opportunity afforded it of explaining its own case. It was simply condemned unheard on one-sided, unsubstantiated statements, although according to the Act of Parliament, and the terms in which it is framed, the Association was in every way entitled to receive the powers for which it made application.

After a conference and correspondence which extended over the next six months the President of the Board of Trade was led to suggest that the Association should apply to the Privy Council for an Enquiry with a view to obtaining the powers it desired; the Association accepted the suggestion and decided in February, 1892, to petition for the grant of a Royal Charter.

In the following month therefore a formal Petition was presented to Her Majesty the Queen in Council praying for the grant of a Royal Charter. The Association prepared and issued to its members a form of petition to the Privy Council and at the same time issued a circular to those who had opposed its application to the Board of Trade pointing out in parallel columns the chief statements which had been made against the Association and its replies thereto.

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