

Nurses' Association, and are opposed to its Registration scheme.

Sir W. Bowman, J. S. Bristowe, John Croft, Sydney Jones, H. Gervis, Thomas Bryant, G. Newton Pitt, J. W. Washbourne, E. C. Perry, W. Arbuthnot Lane, J. C. Stoele, W. H. Allchin, Thomas Bond, F. de Havilland Hall, George Cowell, J. B. Potter, C. N. Macnamara, Stanley Boyd, Fredk. Willcock, John Curnow, Henry G. Sutton, Stephen Mackenzie, Fredk. Treves, A. Ernest Sansom, James Anderson, Charles Mansell Moullin, T. Gilbert Smith, Warren Tay, Fredk. S. Eve, Thomas H. Openshaw, Fredk. H. Smith, W. A. Mackinnon, J. B. C. Reade, W. Nash, S. B. Partridge, Charles D. Madden, Sir Thomas Longman, Sir W. Aitken, J. Lane Notter, A. M. Davies, W. D. Stevenson, John E. Morgan, James Ross, Thomas Harris, Judson S. Bury, D. J. Leech, James Barr, Edward H. Dickinson, J. Dreschfeld, T. Cuming Atkin, Chauncy Puzey, Daniel Harrison, G. G. Hamilton, R. D. Mothersole, W. Alexander, John Cameron, Horace Swete, Geo. W. Crowe, E. Walpole-Simmons, H. G. Budd, T. Bate, G. Hyde, G. R. J. Fletcher, Thomas Annandale, John Chiene, John Duncan, A. G. Miller, Charles W. Cathcart, James Hodsdon, James Finlayson, Wm. J. Fleming.

Then, on May 27, there appeared in the *Times* the following pungent reply, which has made many medical men congratulate themselves that they have not fallen under the lash of two gentlemen who are universally known as two of the keenest critics and best writers in the medical profession.

THE ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION. TO THE EDITOR OF "THE TIMES."

SIR,—The publication in your columns, under a letter from the Treasurer of St. Thomas's Hospital, of a petition which has been presented to the Board of Trade in opposition to the Registration, without the addition of the word "limited," of the Royal British Nurses' Association, leads us to hope that you will admit a reply from some of those who are responsible for the conduct of the work in which the Association is engaged. The petition is, of course, an *ex parte* statement, and a detailed reply to its allegations will be laid before the Board of Trade in due course. Its publication at the present time may therefore be regarded as premature; but, from our point of view, is not to be regretted. Our Association has been established in order to provide remedies for certain crying evils; and we are not sorry that those who are mainly responsible for the existence of these evils should show their hands as plainly as they have done. What we do regret is, that medical men of respectability and, in a few cases, even of eminence, should have been induced, in ignorance of the facts and by the misrepresentations of interested persons, to attach their signatures to statements which are in some instances absolutely unfounded, and in others utterly absurd. The Treasurer of St. Thomas's Hospital may sign whatever he pleases; but some of the names which follow his are those of men who are held in high esteem by the medical profession, and they should, we think, have been careful to confine themselves to the truth.

The title "Treasurer of St. Thomas's Hospital" is eminently calculated to mislead the unwary, and to produce a belief that the person using it is likely to know something about Hospital affairs and management, and, therefore possibly about Nursing. No conclusion could be more erroneous. The government of St. Thomas's Hospital, is in

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the hands of a small number of men, mostly carrying on business in the City, who seek to disguise their insignificance by the adoption of titles like those which are used in a lodge of Oddfellows. They delegate most of their business, not to a committee, but to a "grand" committee, and they elect one of their members to be "treasurer." Sufficient integrity to be trusted with money, sufficient knowledge of figures to understand the accounts, and, generally speaking, some uncertainty as to the use of aspirates, have been the main qualifications of Mr. Wainwright's predecessors. Of his own we have no knowledge, but it is common to the office that its holder, after three months' tenure, is apt to regard himself as an authority upon medical questions. The most important assertion contained in the "Treasurer's" letter is that "medical men who are or who have been directly engaged in teaching and training Nurses have far greater right than others to speak with authority upon the question at issue." Put into other words, this is a claim that junior members of a Hospital staff, whose work is mainly among out-patients, and who have little to do with Nurses beyond delivering to them a few lectures on elementary anatomy and physiology, are better calculated to judge of their qualifications than Physicians or Surgeons of mature experience, who have been employing and observing Nurses for many years, both in Hospital and in private practice.

Coming to the petition itself, we do not in the least object to the Association being called "self-constituted," nor do we see how an association could be constituted in any other manner. We have never heard of any persons constituting any other persons into an association. Neither do we object to the description "ladies and gentlemen," except in so far as it is intended to conceal the fact that the "ladies" are all Trained Nurses or Matrons of great experience, to the number of nearly three thousand; and the "gentlemen" all Physicians or Surgeons, most of whom hold office in great Hospitals. Passing on to the assigned grounds of the petition, we may observe, with reference to Clauses 1, 2, and 3, that they are about equally made up of the *suppressio veri* and of the *suggestio falsi*. The assertion that the "Association aims at exercising, under cover of a licence from the Board of Trade, the power of granting certificates of competency in Nursing, and so of controlling the education of Nurses," is not only untrue, but ridiculous. All that the licence of the Board of Trade can do is to permit the Association to omit the word "limited"—a privilege which the law has specially provided for associations that are not trading concerns. Even the Treasurer of St. Thomas's Hospital cannot prevent the Association becoming incorporated at once with every other power afforded by the Companies Acts, if it chooses to take that course.

The assertions and suggestions that the Association conducts any "written or oral examination of Nurses," that it grants "certificates of competency professing to be authoritative," that it "tests and guarantees by certificate the educational and other qualifications of its members," are simply and totally untrue. What the Association has done is to compile and publish an alphabetical list of Nurses' names, placing opposite to each name the place and period of Hospital training through which that Nurse has passed; investigating each Nurse's present character, and taking power to remove from this list the name of anyone who hereafter proves unworthy of trust. That is all that the Register does; nothing more nor less. The Register is designed to afford the public for the first time some protection against the hundreds of ignorant and untrustworthy women who are now at work as Nurses, bringing danger to the sick and discredit upon the entire calling. It rests now in the hands

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