

of the public to say whether, and when, that protection shall be made complete by Parliamentary action. But we ask the signatories to the petition to state why they consider that the sick should be left at the mercy of any person who chooses to term herself a Nurse, or of those certificated Nurses who have proved themselves unworthy of trust, and some of whom have been imprisoned for very grave offences. We assert that it is a scandal and a grave public danger that such a state of affairs has been permitted so long to exist. Clause 4 of the petition is worthy of being quoted at length:—

"(4) That the authorities of the Nurse-training Schools are alone in a position, from their experience and special knowledge, and from their intimate acquaintance with the individual Nurses who have been trained under their care, to certify who are fit and properly-trained Nurses, and that the certificates of efficiency given by them are sufficient, and are infinitely more valuable and trustworthy than any certificates otherwise acquired could possibly be."

If this be true, it follows that the authorities of the medical schools "are alone in a position, from their experience and special knowledge, and from their intimate acquaintance with the individual 'students' who have been trained under their care, to certify who are fit and properly trained" medical practitioners; and that the certificates of efficiency given by them should be sufficient, and should be regarded as infinitely more valuable and trustworthy than any certificates otherwise acquired (*e.g.*, than the Doctorate of the University of London or the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons), could possibly be. The same principle would apply *mutatis mutandis* to other professions—the Army, the Navy, the Church, the law, and to all in which although "natural gifts and moral qualities" are of undoubted importance, a benighted Legislature still requires the special knowledge which is implied in having passed through a proper curriculum, and which has been tested by a "mere examination."

Under Clause 5 of the petition, the modern improvement in Nursing is claimed for a few of the existing Training Schools attached to Hospitals. The truth is that the improvement has been the result of an irresistible public opinion, and that the establishment of schools to meet the want has been a necessity. The weakness of the schools has been that some of them have been tempted to increase their funds by preying upon the Nurses whom they were bound to protect. The very schools which are most in fault now meet us with the cry, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," but they do so because, like Demetrius and his fellow rioters, "by this craft they have their living."

Finally, we consider that the Treasurer of St. Thomas's Hospital would have been more ingenuous if he had explained that for more than three years the Royal British Nurses' Association attempted to persuade the training schools and other public bodies to undertake the work of Registration, and that it only commenced the onerous and costly task itself, failing all other help. He would also have done well to explain why it is that more than one hundred large London, provincial, Irish, Scottish, and Colonial Hospitals are strongly supporting the Association, and that the few Hospitals who are opposing Registration are doing so for reasons which their subscribers are not likely to approve, and which, therefore, are very judiciously kept in the background.

For example, the London Hospital, which has taken the chief part in the opposition, advertises its ability to supply "thoroughly Trained Nurses" for private patients, and palms off upon those who apply for such attendants pupils who are learning their work in its wards. From this department in 1889 the Charity made a net profit of more than £1,200. The public can draw its own conclusions why the London Hospital authorities have so violently opposed the publication of a list of Trained Nurses, from which the names of its probationers would naturally be conspicuous

by their absence. These and many other facts about the London Hospital have been stated, and have been admitted upon oath before the Select Committee of the House of Lords, and therefore we quote them. Will Mr. J. G. Wainwright now explain why King's College Hospital, Charing-cross Hospital, the Westminster Hospital, and St. Thomas's Hospital object to the public being protected, and the ranks of the Nursing profession being purified, from those who endanger the sick and bring disgrace upon a noble calling? If he declines to do so, it would be well for those who support these institutions to require an answer.

Whatever happens, the Royal British Nurses' Association is confident that, when the public realise the importance of its work, it will receive unstinted support and approval. And, until that time arrives, the Association intends to continue to publish annually its register of Trained Nurses, unheeding the violent and untruthful attacks which may be made upon it.—We are, Sir, your obedient servants,

JAMES CRICHTON BROWNE, M.D., LL.D., F.R.S.

R. BRUDENELL CARTER, F.R.C.S.

ETHEL GORDON FENWICK (late Matron of St.

May 23. Bartholomew's Hospital).

On May 13 there appeared in the *Medical Press and Circular*, the letter from Dr. Sansom which we have been criticising for the past two weeks. We had intended to have returned to the matter this week, but the answer which Mrs. Bedford Fenwick has made, and which we now reprint from the *Medical Press and Circular* of the 27th ult., is so complete and crushing, that further comment on our part is superfluous:—

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "MEDICAL PRESS AND CIRCULAR."

SIR,—It has been a matter of regret and surprise to some of us who have devoted much time and energy for long periods to the systematic instruction and training of Nurses, to observe the attitude of the Medical Press in regard to the question of the establishment of a General Register for Nurses by the Royal British Nurses' Association. In letters to the *British Medical Journal*, June 29, 1889, and the *Lancet* of the same date, I advanced arguments from the point of view of one who had a share in initiating and organising the system which obtains in one of the largest Nurse-training Schools against the project of a general Nurse Register.

It was soon proved that I was not alone in my objection, for in the *British Medical Journal* of July 20, 1889, appeared a memorial from the authorities and the medical and surgical instructors of the following Institutions—viz., St. Thomas's Hospital, Guy's Hospital, Westminster Hospital, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, King's College Hospital, London Hospital, St. Mary's Hospital, and the St. Marylebone Infirmary and Training School, emphasising my arguments, and declaring that those who represent the largest Nursing interest in the metropolis and throughout the country, and who have most to do with the training and examination of Nurses, dissent from the methods of the Association, and deprecate its proposed Register.

It is abundantly proved that the opposition which was conscientiously expressed is not cooled down, but has grown in intensity and magnitude, in spite of the fact that an opinion adverse to it has been expressed by many who are held in the highest esteem. I am forced to the conclusion that many of my personal friends cannot have adequately considered the situation. At any rate, this conclusion is irresistible—that if the project of the Royal British Nurses' Association is right, then the views of the managers of nearly all our great Nursing Schools are wrong. These views I will briefly epitomise.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)