

she would not have been able to accomplish what had been done. Thirty-two years was not long to look back upon, but it was a long time to go on fighting uphill for a righteous cause, opposed at every step by a powerful and self-interested opposition. It was the conscientious convictions and splendid help of a few which were at the back of the present victory.

Miss Heather-Bigg had referred to the occasion thirty-two years ago when a few matrons met together at 20, Upper Wimpole Street, to discuss the future organisation of the Nursing Profession and to found the British Nurses' Association. She held in her hand the manuscript of her opening speech made on December 10th, 1887, to some thirty matrons there assembled, and by special request read it to those present.

#### ADDRESS OF MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK TO HOSPITAL MATRONS, DECEMBER 10, 1887.

LADIES.—I think you will agree with me when I state, that it is a feeling of universal fellowship and love, the desire to extend aid to the helpless which forms the key-note of the Nursing Profession, and that it is strange that the members of a Profession with such aims and objects, should be among themselves so disunited and forgetful of the obligations they owe to one another.

The further development of the Profession is cramped by a system of selfish isolation. The majority of those women who have been placed in prominent positions, as the Matrons of large hospitals, or the Superintendents of Nursing Schools, have until lately failed to see, that however well they may discharge the duties they owe to the individual sphere in which they are placed, their position still obliges them to accept another and great duty, and that in their hands alone must and should rest the furtherance of the Nursing Profession as a whole, that they can no more with honour refuse to accept that responsibility than they can refuse to perform the immediate duties of their offices.

Those who by their talents and good fortune have attained to higher and more influential positions in the nursing world, are bound by that very circumstance, not only to exercise their kindly influence for the benefit of those who are under their immediate care, but to further as far as possible throughout the members of the Nursing Profession goodwill and love, and that strength which is born of unity.

The Profession of Nursing is now composed of thousands of aimless atoms, who have no recognised status, and no guardians of their interests, and unlike other professions, are with few exceptions, as a *common body*, absolutely without *esprit de corps*. Nurses have, as a rule, strong individual affection for the hospital where they were trained, and much unity often exists among its members, but they have none of that wider

and broader sympathy, that embraces every woman, who, however and wherever, is devoting her life to the care of the sick.

To meet this want for a bond of unity and protection, and to extend to its utmost the sympathy that should exist among all nurses, it is proposed to found a British Nurses' Association, the pith of whose aim and objects is, to benefit every individual member of the Nursing Profession, by raising and firmly establishing the standard of the Nursing Profession as a whole. This can only be done by the united effort of the nurses themselves, they now form such a large and influential body, that it is most necessary for them, in fact I should say distinctly detrimental to their interests to attach themselves to any other Association. They only require the kindly support of the medical profession to be able to form among themselves, and for themselves, by combination and self-help, an Association which will be able to support and protect their interests.

Before discussion is invited as to the desirability of forming such an Association, I should like to touch upon one of the principal objects, that is the Registration of Nurses. I mention this subject specially because I am deeply interested—I may say concerned—about it, because it is of *vital* importance to you one and all, and because it has already been taken up by a heterogenous Association\*, which offers to register nurses "after one year's training only—at 2s. 6d. a head." Nurses can avail themselves of this questionable privilege at any registry office in the United Kingdom!

Now I state most emphatically that this scheme cannot be too severely condemned. It is derogatory in the highest degree to the Nursing Profession, calculated to bring discredit and ridicule upon its projectors, and eminently unfair towards an ignorant and credulous public.

In my opinion Registration, to be of any value at all, must be undertaken by a legally recognised body, largely composed of the heads of the Nursing Profession themselves, with the full concurrence of medical men. We must recognise the fact that Registration is only the lever to that high, irreplaceable position to which all nurses should aspire, and if unanimous can easily attain. The time has come when this great movement is to be publicly discussed, and I call upon you ladies present, representing as you do by virtue of your office the leaders of the great army of nurses, to rise up and protect them and guard their interests with that determination and zeal which springs alone from knowledge.

You have a great and bounden duty to perform from which no argument should deter you.

Mrs. Fenwick said she was glad that in the Address mention had been made of the BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING, because they would never have got their principles inserted in the Registration Acts without it. The nurses had

\* The Hospitals Association founded by Mr. Henry C. Burdett, Financial Secretary of the Share and Loan Department of the Stock Exchange, later Sir Henry Burdett.

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