

HOW THE COLLEGE CAUCUS CAPTURED THE COUNCIL.

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The Inquiry into the Petition for a Royal Charter by the Royal British Nurses' Association by the Committee of the Privy Council, held on November 21st and 28th, 1892, was reported *verbatim* in this Journal at the time, and is now of unusual importance in the History of Nursing in England, and when that history comes to be compiled, as it should be, now that the Nurses' Registration Acts are on the Statute Book, it will prove one of its most thrilling pages.

The case in Opposition to the Petition opens with the timeworn paragraph:—

1. A Petition has been presented to the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty in Council by the Council of the Nightingale Fund, praying that Her Majesty may be pleased not to grant a Charter for the incorporation of the Association.

In paragraphs 2, 3, and 4 a long list of opposing hospitals and Nursing Institutions is set forth. The "anti" Petition runs to 54 "pars.," of which the following will prove the biased futility of the employers' point of view in attempting to maintain their autocratic economic control over a body of women, for thousands of whom they were not financially responsible. After setting forth the work to date of the training schools, par. 12 ends: "The Nurses trained in the said schools find employment either in the service of the hospitals or as private or district Nurses." No mention is made of the 14-hour day, the starvation diet, the penurious emoluments offered, and the gross sweating of the private nurses even during their years' probationship, who were contributing thousands of pounds annually to hospitals exploiting their work. From par. 13 we may quote: "In the efforts thus made for the improvement of Nursing the primary aim has been to raise the character of the Nurses, and to cultivate and protect their moral qualities, and then to provide such means of practical and scientific teaching as might enable them intelligently to obey the orders of the medical men."

The special pleading of the "anti" Petition is all in support of the continued servitude of the probationer and nurse. She is never to escape the clutches of her employer, in or out of hospital. Private registers are advocated, and the statement made that "It is the practice of most, if not all, of the training schools

to grant a certificate to each Nurse who satisfactorily completes the prescribed course."

The Nightingale Training School opposed strenuously the granting of certificates to its nurses, thus providing them with some degree of independence, and it was not until twelve years after the presentation of this Petition that this reform took place at St. Thomas's Hospital, just twenty years after we had recommended and been granted this modicum of justice for nurses at St. Bartholomew's Hospital! How nearly this lack of certificates at St. Thomas's Hospital in those days cost the whole nursing profession the record of their certificates on the State Register thirty years later will be told in due course.

Par. 52 submits that, "having regard to the facts stated in paragraphs 14, 15, and 16 (in support of private registers kept by hospitals), the establishment of a general register of nurses is unnecessary, and that it is to the more general establishment and further development of institutions for the supply of private nurses attached to hospitals that the public should look for a supply of such nurses and for the protection of incompetent nurses."

The human being, the nurse, is handled throughout in this document (as she is being handled thirty years later by "anti's" on the G.N.C.) as a machine, without either body, soul, or spirit.

This instructive employers' "anti" Petition in opposition to a Charter of emancipation for the trained nurse summarises its ten Reasons against registration as follows:—

REASONS.

1. That a general register is not adapted to the calling of nurses for the sick, and that any possible register of Nurses would be misleading to the public and detrimental to the interests of nursing.

2. That the proposed register of Nurses is in no way analogous to the existing register of medical men, and that the arguments in support of the latter do not apply to the former.

3. That the register of Nurses could not be effectively carried on except under statutory powers. (We agree; and that was the objective of the R.B.N.A., as announced in 1893. Yet we find the "anti" Schools, and Sir Arthur Stanley, offering trained nurses a *voluntary* System of Registration twenty-three years later in 1915!)

4. That any attempt to maintain such a register under the authority of a Charter would lead to mischievous results. (Yet we find the College of Nursing, Ltd., using every blan-

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