

## HOW THE COLLEGE CAUCUS CAPTURED THE COUNCIL.

(Continued from page 318, May 19th.)

The new generation, which apparently knows so little of the history of State Registration in this country, must excuse me if I emphasise important events which are of greater importance than they realise.

In the years 1904 and 1905, the Select Committee on Nurses' Registration took evidence for and against it in the House of Commons—under the Chairmanship of Mr. H. J. Tennant, a Committee, which began its deliberations in a somewhat antagonistic spirit, but which after listening to and sifting the evidence, presented a unanimous report in favour of State Registration. That was a great triumph of reason over prejudice, and although Parliament left it at that, and did little or nothing to enforce its decisions, the Blue Books containing the evidence were invaluable for propaganda purposes, and should still be studied by those nurses who wish to know the truth.

It was this thirst for accurate knowledge which has made Miss Lavinia Dock, R.N., the retired Hon. Secretary of the International Council of Nurses, the great nurse historian of our time. She attended meetings of the Select Committee, and gave evidence before it, and has done more in the past twenty years than any other woman to place the truth on record in her monumental works on nursing evolution.

One would have thought that the "Antis"—whose opinions failed to convince the Select Committee—would have themselves learned something from the expert evidence placed before it, but, alas! prejudice and privilege are very hard to convince.

It was during this investigation that, at the request of Sir E. Cooper Perry—then Medical Superintendent of Guy's Hospital—seven financial magnates in the City of London became Subscribers to the Memorandum of one of the most autocratic Societies, ever evolved from the brain of man, for the subjugation of working women; and our Summary, after studying the Articles of Association, appeared in this Journal on February 11th, 1905, and sounded a note of warning to the nurses of that day. We reprint it below and specially commend it to the intelligent consideration of Members of the College of Nursing, Ltd., as the Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association of the Incorporated Society for Promoting the Higher Education and Training of Nurses is almost word for word that of the Constitution of the College.\*

### A SUMMARY.

The incorporation of this Society is sought for by seven gentlemen in the City of London. It is, therefore, needless to say that, however eminent in financial matters, they must be more or less

ignorant concerning medical and nursing questions. Yet the objects for which they seek incorporation involve many points of the greatest technical difficulty. They seek, for example, to promote the higher education and training of nurses and uniformity in their education. They seem to think they can do this by "recognising approved nursing schools," and granting certificates of proficiency in nursing to persons who have passed prescribed examinations, and, further, certificates on special branches of nursing. They evidently consider themselves competent "to institute and to conduct examinations for such purposes, and even "to prescribe courses of study" which nurses shall undergo.

Still more serious is their avowed intention to make and maintain a Register of certificated nurses, and to remove from the Register "the name of any person as the Society may in its discretion think proper." Incidentally, they propose to take legal proceedings against nurses pretending to be certificated by the Society. . . . As the scheme, on the face of it, emanates from unprofessional persons, it is almost certain that laxity and mistakes would take place, and the dangers of the scheme to the public cannot therefore be exaggerated. . . . So far as the Nursing Profession is concerned, the objects of this Society, if carried out, would place any nurse whose name was on the Register entirely at the mercy of the Society. Indeed, it is definitely provided that any three members of the Council could take a nurse's name off the Register for any purpose whatsoever; or for the matter of that, without any reason whatever. But that is not all, by any means. Apparently such a nurse would have no redress of any kind; so that this provision simply means that the Society proposes to render the nurses who are foolish enough to trust it absolutely defenceless and voiceless from a professional point of view. So far as the Nurse Training Schools are concerned, it is actually suggested that only certain schools should be "recognised," which, of course, means that these schools which are not recognised are to be considered outside the pale, and that the nurses they train or employ are not to be regarded as trained nurses at all. The irony of the scheme is that the Schools which are graciously recognised by this Society would be absolutely under the heel of the twelve persons who form the Council of the Society. It is impossible to believe that the great hospitals of this country will consent to be placed in such a humiliating position of subserviency to a self-appointed body such as this Council is. And it is certain that any nurse who placed herself under the control of this Council would only have herself to thank for any professional detriment she might suffer in consequence. The whole power of the Society is practically vested in the hands of the Council, which is to consist of *not less than nine, nor more than twelve members of the Society*. The Council has power to appoint its own members, and even nominates to the annual meeting the persons to be elected by the Society on the Council *at any meeting, either of the Council*

\* The College Memorandum was signed by Red Cross clerks and others, in place of City magnates.

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