

(1) Whether a body of some 80,000 women shall be permitted to carry on their most important professional duties under just economic conditions;

(2) Whether the Nursing Act passed in 1919 for the benefit of nurses and the protection of the public shall be carried into full effect, or whether its provisions shall be rendered null and void by the Council appointed under the Act to carry out those provisions.

Dr. Fenwick then briefly enumerated the principal events in the movement for Nursing Reform.

The enquiry by a Select Committee of the House of Lords in 1891-1893 into Metropolitan Hospitals, when it was definitely proved that the minimum hours of work of nurses in hospitals was 84 per week, that the nurses were badly housed, very insufficiently fed, and that they were paid during their three years' training the average wage of 5s. a week. The revelations then made led to considerable improvements, as the Nursing Reform party steadily gained in strength.

But opposition had been persistently evidenced by hospital authorities since the movement for Nursing Reform was commenced in 1887, by the formation of an Association of trained nurses, assisted by Members of the Royal Family, and many leading medical men. The Association was simply founded for the union and mutual help and support of nurses, and for the improvement of their professional work. It was at once bitterly attacked by hospital authorities; Matrons and Secretaries wrote and published pamphlets denouncing it. Nurses were threatened with loss of employment if they joined it. Dr. Fenwick described the bitter opposition of hospital authorities to the application of the Association to the Privy Council for a Royal Charter, costing nearly £1,500, to prove the case and get the Royal Charter for the Royal British Nurses' Association. So the fight between the hospitals and the Nursing Reform party had gone on ever since. It took thirty-two years of constant and strenuous exertion, at a cost of more than £20,000, before they succeeded in getting the Nurses' Registration Act passed in 1919. It was then hoped that the hospitals would realise the fight was over, and that their nurses would in future be free agents, subject only to the disciplinary control of the General Nursing Council. Unfortunately, this hope proved to be too optimistic.

Dr. Fenwick then related how the House of Lords had passed, unanimously, a Nurses' Registration Bill, in 1908, and it became realised that the fight was nearly over and the opponents of Registration started various flank movements to defeat it. He described the formation of the College of Nursing, Ltd., in 1916, by the Hon. Sir Arthur Stanley and a number of hospital Matrons, many of whom had bitterly opposed the Registration of Nurses, and the pledge they gave to nurses that whenever a Nurses' Registration Act was passed they would be placed on the Register automatically and without further payment. In other words, they promised that they could and would dictate to Parliament what the terms of a Registration Act should be, and that they could and would obtain for the members of the College of Nursing, Ltd., preferential treatment under that Act over all other nurses in the country.

Dr. Fenwick showed how when the Nurses' Registration Bill, introduced by Major Barnett, was given a second reading with support from every side of the House of Commons, and went into Committee, the College of Nursing, Ltd., paraded the membership obtained on the strength of the above promise as a plea for many amendments, including the reduction of the Registration fee to one guinea, which must inevitably cause serious financial difficulty to the General Nursing Council in future.

The object of the College Matrons, it was contended, was to secure the election of hospital matrons in future on the General Nursing Council, and so keep the whole

Nursing Profession in their hands. These Matrons were the servants of the hospital authorities and bound, therefore, to obey their orders.

It made a travesty of the Nurses' Registration Act if the trained nurses of this country were always to be in subjection to the Hospital Authorities. Such a condition of servitude would be impossible in any other profession, trade or calling.

With regard to the Nation's Fund for Nurses, Dr. Fenwick said that the College of Nursing, Ltd., exhibited such extravagance in its working expenses that its funds soon became exhausted. A number of actresses, forming the Actresses' Suffrage Society, and some ladies of title formed a "Nation's Fund for Nurses" despite the strong protests of the established Societies of Nurses, appealed to the public for money for "poor and distressed nurses," and, quite incidentally, for an endowment fund for the College of Nursing, Ltd. When, after some three years, the Nation's Fund published an Account, it was found that the expenses were enormous, that the amount given to nurses was very small, and that the bulk of the money had been handed over to the College of Nursing, Ltd.

Dr. Fenwick concluded by appealing, on behalf of the Deputation, to the Minister of Health, as the Minister authorised by Parliament, to control the nursing profession, to give its 80,000 members in this country, the simple measure of justice they seek, viz., an inquiry into the causes of unrest, friction, and hardship which are causing such harm to a profession which, by its arduous and self-sacrificing labours, has deserved well of its country.

Speech by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, S.R.N.

SIR,—While cordially supporting the Petition for a Select Committee of the House of Commons to inquire into the whole Nursing Question, I desire to direct your attention to two points of urgent importance to nurses in training, and to Registered Nurses.

I.

A PRESCRIBED TRAINING.

The right of Nurses in training to a "Prescribed Training," carried out in an institution approved by the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, as provided by the Nurses' Registration Act, 1919. Section 3 (2) (a) and (b).

The education of nurses has so far never been standardised in this country, and probationers entering hospitals and infirmaries for training have had no guarantee that after several years of strenuous service they would have received an adequate training to qualify them for their work.

Sub-section 2 states that "Rules under this section shall contain provisions—

"(a) requiring as a condition of the admission of any person to the register that that person shall have undergone the prescribed training, and shall possess the prescribed experience, in the nursing of the sick; and

"(b) requiring that the prescribed training shall be carried out either in an institution approved by the Council in that behalf, or in the service of the Admiralty, the Army Council, or the Air Council."

At present the Syllabus of Training issued by the General Nursing Council for England and Wales is *advisory* only, and we claim that a Syllabus of Training which is "merely a model" does not conform to the provisions of the Act; that it will be ignored by those institutions where it is most imperative that it should be enforced, and that it is most unjust to probationers in training that they should be required to give three years to preparation for the State Examination in Nursing, without any obligation upon the part of the Nurse Training Schools to give them adequate teaching in preparation for that Examination, upon which their whole professional future depends.

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