

ETHEL GORDON FENWICK, F.B.C.N.

The next great movement in the annals of Nursing was for the organisation of the nurses themselves. It soon became clear that the isolated units who formed the new profession of nursing needed association, stabilisation, organisation, in order that their views on professional matters might be voiced, their economic emancipation achieved, and uniformity of educational standards established. And this was even a harder task than that which confronted Miss Nightingale, for the whole nation was stirred to its depths by the scandal of the conditions in the hospitals in the Crimean War. Miss Nightingale, with her professional knowledge, her courage, her organising ability, and her personal charm, was hailed as a deliverer, was supported by the Government, and worshipped by the sick and wounded soldiers for whom she cared so tenderly.

The pioneer of professional organisation and economic reform had a stonier path to tread, for the campaign affected many economic interests, and so raised a storm of opposition, lasting over a long term of years. The woman of destiny in this connection was Ethel Gordon Manson, later Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, who began her training as a nurse at an early age, and at twenty-four was appointed Matron of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, where she organised the Nursing School with conspicuous success.

Mrs. Fenwick possessed a rare combination of qualities needed by a leader in such a campaign—vision, clear judgment, undaunted courage, public spirit, tenacity of purpose, a genius for organisation, unlimited capacity for hard work, a personality which carries conviction and commands respect; these were some of the qualities which she brought to the campaign, and she needed them all.

ORGANISATION.

In 1887, Mrs. Fenwick, in conjunction with Dr. Bedford Fenwick, initiated the British Nurses' Association, the first object of which was "To unite all qualified British Nurses in membership of a recognised profession." (This was the first time such a proposal had been made in this or any other country.) Secondly, "To provide for their Registration . . . as evidence of their having received systematic training." Thirdly, "To associate them for their mutual help and protection, and for the advancement in every way of their professional work." With a view to the attainment of these objects it was declared to be the immediate aim of the Association to obtain a Royal Charter of Incorporation.

In 1893 a Royal Charter was granted to the Royal British Nurses' Association on the Petition of the late Princess Christian (President of the Association), and twenty-eight other signatories, after an Appeal against the grant had been heard by the Privy Council of many powerful opponents. For her signal services in promoting the grant of the Charter, to which she was a Signatory, Mrs. Fenwick was specially mentioned by name in the first Bye-Laws of the Association.

The opponents having failed to gain their object endeavoured by indirect methods, with some measure of success for some years, to nullify the work of the Association.

STATE REGISTRATION.

Mrs. Fenwick's proposal for the standardisation of Nursing Education and the Registration under the authority of the State of those who had attained that standard, simple and reasonable as it appeared, aroused unceasing hostility from those who desired to keep nurses unorganised, whether from economic or autocratic reasons.

The first Nurses' Registration Bill for the United Kingdom was drafted by Mrs. Fenwick, and introduced into the House of Commons in 1904, on behalf of the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses.

Thereafter the Bill of this Society, and others, were introduced each year until 1915, when during the years of the War, the introduction of Private Members' Bills was debarred.

The formation of the Central Committee for the State Registration of Nurses in 1910, on the initiative of Mrs. Fenwick, consolidated in one Central Organisation, through delegation, the British Medical Association and the self-governing Association of Nurses working for State Registration.

The story of the discreditable opposition to the proposal for State Registration of Nurses, lasting over a period of 32 years, is told elsewhere. Suffice it here to say that on December 23rd, 1919, Parliament set the seal of its approval on the proposal, and Mrs. Fenwick and a little group of those associated with her, had the happiness of listening to the declaration of the Royal Assent to Acts for the Registration of Nurses for England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland, from the vantage point of the red benches of the House of Lords, to which they had been courteously bidden.

The work of Registration is carried out by the three General Nursing Councils set up under the authority of Parliament, Mrs. Fenwick being appointed by the then Minister of Health as a member of the first General Nursing Council for England and Wales.

The State Registration of Nurses, the movement for which was initiated in this country by Dr. and Mrs. Bedford Fenwick proved to be a world-wide need, and is now in force in every continent in the world.

HIGHER EDUCATION.

The foundation by an anonymous donor with an endowment of £100,000 of the British College of Nurses, to be composed of Fellows and Members who are Registered Nurses, and who at the conclusion of a Period of Grace will be admitted only after passing examinations of a high standard, marks another step forward in nursing organisation.

In recognition of Mrs. Fenwick's life-work in the cause of Nurses' education it is appropriate that she should have been appointed the first President of the College.

INTERNATIONALISM.

Another movement of world-wide extent, founded by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick in 1899, is the International Council of Nurses, which now includes national organisations of Nurses in 19 countries.

At its last Congress, held in Helsingfors, Finland, in 1925, 33 countries, including China and Japan, were represented, and over 1,000 nurses were present.

A VOICE IN THE PRESS.

The vision and self-sacrifice of Mrs. Bedford Fenwick were again proved in 1893, when she secured *The Nursing Record*, now incorporated in *THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING*, in order that organised nurses should have a free voice in the Press, and since that time she has acted as its Hon. Editor, and maintained it at a cost known only to herself.

Her many other activities on behalf of nurses and the community would take a volume to narrate, and will only be fully appraised in the future when viewed as a whole in the light of history.

REBECCA STRONG, F.B.C.N.

The *doyenne* of Nursing School organisation at the present time, Mrs. Strong, entered the Nightingale Training School at St. Thomas's Hospital, London, in the sixties of the last century, and is still a vigorous, alert, forceful member of the Nursing Profession, as demonstrated by

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