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## EDITORIAL.

### THE DANGERS OF A COMPETING REGISTER.

The Petition for the grant of a Royal Charter by the College of Nursing, Ltd., was considered by a Committee of the Privy Council, consisting of Lord Warrington of Cliffe, Sir Maurice de Bunsen, and the Lord Advocate for Scotland (the Right Hon. William Watson, K.C., M.P.), who sat in the Council Chamber at the Privy Council Office, Downing Street, W., on February 29th. It was opposed by the Royal British Nurses' Association, the British College of Nurses, the Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland, the Professional Union of Trained Nurses, the Scottish Nurses' Association, and the Poor Law Officers' Union.

Dr. Bedford Fenwick (Trustee) and Mrs. Bedford Fenwick (President) of the British College of Nurses, and Sir Arthur Stanley (Chairman) and Sir Cooper Perry (Hon. Secretary) of the College of Nursing, Ltd., were present, and when the proceedings began the Committee Room was filled with well-known members of the Nursing Profession, mostly members of the opposing societies.

Mr. R. Mitchell Banks, K.C., and Mr. Cyril Asquith (instructed by Messrs. Charles Russell & Co.), appeared for the applicants; and Mr. Gavin Simonds, K.C., and Mr. Howard Wright (instructed by Mr. R. E. F. Lander), appeared for the opposing bodies.

The chief objection of the opponents to the grant of the Charter was that under its provisions the College of Nursing sought powers to maintain a Register of Nurses and to give a Diploma, which must, therefore, have been in competition with that published under State Authority.

It was, therefore, extremely satisfactory to them when Mr. Mitchell Banks, before Mr. Gavin Simonds could submit arguments for the opposition on these two points, informed the Committee of the Privy Council that the College of Nursing would be content to keep a List of Members, and not a Register; there was no idea of setting up a competing Register, a List, not a Register, was now kept of their membership.

In reply to a question from Lord Warrington from the chair, he expressed, on behalf of the College of Nursing, its readiness to substitute a certificate for a Diploma. They set no store by that, and would like to abandon it.

Arguments in support of the Petition and the Counter Petitions were then presented by Counsel on both sides, in the course of which Mr. Mitchell Banks again repudiated any desire on the part of the College of Nursing to set up a competing Register or a different qualification from that required for the State Register. They were

ready to make it clear by any amendment of the Charter considered desirable. He also reiterated that they did not wish to have a Diploma.

Mr. Gavin Simonds, for the opponents to the Petition, said that theirs was no captious opposition. He noted that the College of Nursing would undertake that nothing in this Charter would in any way suggest a competing Register. That had been conceded. That being so, that part of the case was disposed of.

He criticised the methods by which the membership of the College of Nursing was obtained, and elicited the facts that in spite of a membership now placed at 26,300, only some 7,000 members are annual subscribers, and that the number of those who voted in the last election for its Council was about 5,000.

The Committee having deliberated for a short time in private, Lord Warrington stated that they would report in favour of granting a Charter to the College of Nursing. The Draft Charter, however, required amendment, and in due course the particulars would be communicated to the College.

The importance of never letting anything go by default is amply exemplified in this instance, as well as the value to nurses of a body such as the British College of Nurses, financially in a position to defend their interests. Had the opponents not taken action, the Draft Charter of the College of Nursing would, in all probability, have gone through unaltered, and it would have obtained powers to maintain a rival Register of Nurses, which could not fail to be inimical to the prestige of that published under the authority of the State.

What would have made this Register, and a defined system of Education under a Royal Charter, so specially dangerous would have been that the General Nursing Council for England and Wales has so far failed to fulfil its duty to define a prescribed scheme of training under the Nurses' Registration Act, and has, in our opinion, failed to protect the interests of the profession in not opposing, before the Privy Council, the demand of the College of Nursing, Ltd., to institute a rival Register.

The College of Nursing, Ltd., will, no doubt, gain its Charter, but the opposing Societies realise that, by giving an undertaking that it would not publish a Register competing with the State Register, a very serious danger to the profession and the public has been averted.

This has, however, only been done by prompt and forceful action, and the free nurses owe a deep debt of gratitude to the Treasurer of the British College of Nurses (Dr. Bedford Fenwick), for the time, thought and infinite pains he has expended in connection with this matter.

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