

## Royal British Nurses' Association.

MANSION HOUSE MEETING,  
ON FRIDAY, MARCH 18, 1892.



HIS was held on Friday, March 18, 1892, and the Egyptian Hall was crowded by a large audience, numbering probably about eight hundred people.

The Chair was taken at four p.m. by the LORD MAYOR, who spoke as follows: Ladies and Gentlemen,—Before the proceedings are entered upon, and before the first Resolution is submitted to this meeting, I desire to read a telegram I have received from Her Royal Highness the Princess Christian, to the following effect: "May I ask you to accept the expression of my sincere regret at being unable to be present to-morrow, and to express the same to the meeting, as well as the deep interest I take in the welfare of the Royal British Nurses' Association.—PRINCESS CHRISTIAN." It is needless to say that we all deeply regret the cause of Her Royal Highness's absence, which is a source of disappointment to us to-day, as we had hoped for her presence. Now, ladies and gentlemen, you have done me the honour to ask me to preside at this gathering, and this is the second meeting of your Association in the Mansion House, as my predecessor once had the pleasure of taking the chair for you. I hold in my hand your First Annual Report, and I see, in the Bye-laws, under "Objects," in paragraph two, that your aim is "to unite all qualified British Nurses in membership of a recognised profession," and, further, to provide for their Registration on terms satisfactory to medical men, the public, and the Nurses themselves. No one will deny that it is eminently desirable that Nurses shall receive systematic training to help them, and that such training shall be duly recognised. Your Association is now making an effort to obtain a Royal Charter. What is your object in trying to get this? A very simple one—namely, in order to obtain incorporation for the Association. What the arguments on the other side can be, against such a course, I confess that I fail, utterly, to grasp. The profession of a Nurse is a very responsible one, and we do not deny to any other responsible body the position to which they are entitled by examination and by certificates. You are seeking merely that the Nurses who have received training in Hospitals should have that fact guaranteed to the public by the inclusion of their names on the pages of a published Register of Nurses. I cannot, of course, bring professional knowledge to bear on this subject, but I can bring a commercial mind—whatever that may be worth—and I give you an instance of how much some system for ascertaining proficiency is sought. In the City of London, sanitation is occupying our deepest attention, and we feel that the plumbers' work in connection with our habitations should be of such a character as to leave no doubt whatever of its thoroughness; well, one of the City companies has brought forward a plan for the registration of properly-qualified plumbers; and if it is worth while to do this for those who look after our drains, surely it is necessary to do it for those who look after our bodies! Indeed, I go so far as to say that, unless this is done, there is a manifest want of safeguard for the public, and therefore I cannot recognise any arguments on the other side. (Applause.) It gives me sincere pleasure to see such a great meeting as this, and to welcome you here to-day, and I will now call upon Sir William Savory to propose the first Resolution; but, before that is done, Dr. Fenwick will read you a letter which he has just received, and which, I think, will be of interest to you.

Dr. BEDFORD FENWICK then said: My Lord Mayor, Ladies, and Gentlemen,—Amongst the letters of regret at inability to be present to-day, which have been received from Sir James Paget, Sir Joseph Fayer, Sir Edward Sieveking,

Sir Edwin Saunders, and others, there is one from Sir Richard Quain, which I would read, as his opinion must carry the greatest weight with the profession and the public: "Dear Dr. Fenwick,—I regret that it is not possible for me to attend the meeting at the Mansion House to-day in support of the Royal British Nurses' Association. I have carefully read the draft of the proposed Charter, and it seems to me that, if the objects set forth in that document are fully and faithfully carried out, as I have reason to feel that they will be, nothing but good, alike for the public, the medical profession, and Nurses can result.—Yours very faithfully, RICHARD QUAIN." (Loud applause.)

Sir W. SAVORY then said—My Lord Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen,—In the first place, I desire to express our deep regret that Princess Christian is unable to be here with us to-day. You all know of the sad cause that has rendered the presence of Her Royal Highness impossible, and I am sure you all sympathise with her in her sorrow. No one who understands the part she has taken in the advancement of this Association will need to be told that no light cause would deprive us of her presence. In this ancient and historical hall, many noble causes have been discussed; but none of more importance than the present one, and none more worthy, for the subject comes home to every man, woman, and child, for all may suffer from disease or injury. Nursing has existed from the time of the creation of women, but no science is known in which there has been more signal progress within recent times. Nurses, like Doctors, were once regarded as necessary evils, and were in a hundred ways the theme of the satirist. They are now, however, universally respected and esteemed, and their claims are not thought unworthy of the interest and support of members of our Royal Family. The great change which has taken place in nursing might be aptly described as a revolution. Formerly, the charge of nursing devolved upon anyone, now it is everywhere recognised that not only are the qualities with which all good women are endowed, necessary—such as tenderness, faithfulness, and devotion to duty—but knowledge also, which can be gained only by a term of practical instruction and training. Nursing has attained to the grade of skilled, instead of unskilled labour. It is understood that no amount of goodwill or willingness can compensate for ignorance, and though it is sometimes objected that our Nurses know too much, those who urge this objection are usually those who know too little. The ranks of Nurses are now joined by the best and noblest women in the Kingdom, and the time has fully arrived when the work they do must be formally recognised. They ask for organisation, and that our Nurses shall no longer be scattered over the country without cohesion, that they shall be associated together for their own good, and for that of the public. Nurses are in a position to claim this boon, and the public should insist on it in their own interests. "Oh, but," it is said, "there are objections to this." I know there are; but no worthy ones. I have carefully gone over every objection I have met with, and they arise either from unfounded prejudice or from the jealousies of certain Institutions, who pretend that the matter is one which affects them more than their Nurses, and under that mistaken idea have opposed the efforts of our Association on every possible occasion. Now, I contend that the question is practically not theirs at all; it concerns Nurses and the public alone. (Loud applause.) The first step has been taken; the Association has three thousand members; we have on our Register no fewer than eighteen hundred names, and the Nurses must go on and claim what is due to them. They will receive the cordial support of the medical profession, and as one who during many years of practice in London has been deeply indebted to Nurses, and who knows for what objects they sacrifice their time and their lives, I stand here with pride and pleasure to plead their cause. The Charter is only sought to obtain the legal rights of incorporation, and the list of those who have applied for the Charter

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