

THE GENERAL PRACTITIONERS'
ALLIANCE
AND THE
ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION.

FOR the following account of the proceedings we are indebted to our influential contemporary, *The Hospital Gazette*:—

On April 5th, a special general meeting of the members of the Alliance was held at Exeter Hall, to consider the proposed Royal Charter to the Royal British Nurses' Association, Mr. GEORGE BROWN, President, in the chair, and there was a large attendance.

The Hon. Secretary having read the notice convening the meeting, the President said that when the draft of the proposed Charter came into his hands, about a fortnight ago, he convened a meeting of the Council to consider the matter. The Council regarded it as too important a question to express an opinion on without consulting the members generally, and hence the present meeting. The Council had considered the clauses of the Charter with great care, and could see nothing in them calculated to injure the profession of medicine in the slightest degree, or which was opposed to the public interest; indeed, it would be a distinct gain to medical practitioners to be able to consult a Register in which was recorded the names of Nurses and the training they had received. He had been asked why he was in favour of the Charter entitling Nurses to Register, and yet was opposed to the Registration of Midwives. His reply was that there was no comparison between the two cases. The Royal Charter would not give the Association powers in regard to the practice of Nursing that they did not possess at the present time; it altered no law and did not make Registration compulsory. The Bill for the Registration of Midwives was quite another matter: it proposed to alter the laws of the land in regard to the practice of Midwifery, and created, in fact, a new order of medical practitioners who had given no guarantee of their fitness to practise the obstetric art. Medical men had no objection to Nurses, whether medical, surgical, or obstetric, having their names and addresses placed on a Register, but they were strongly opposed to any legislation giving increased powers to unqualified women in regard to the practice of Midwifery. The Council, while individually in favour of the proposed Charter being granted to the Nurses' Association, would not support it officially in the name of the Alliance unless authorised to do so by a vote of the members. A resolution on the subject had been approved by the Council of the

Alliance, and this would be proposed by Dr Eady, and seconded by Dr. Alderson, after which it would be open to any member to discuss the question.

Dr. EADY said the question they had met to consider was an important one; important to the Nurses, important to themselves as medical practitioners, but of most importance to the public. He said that he was not at present connected with the Association, or connected with any Nursing or Nurse Training Institution, so that he approached the matter from the point of view of the family doctor, anxious to do his best for his patients, and desirous, when wanting a Nurse, of obtaining the services of a competent respectable woman who would carry out his orders implicitly, and of whom, when she left her case, he could conscientiously say that she had performed her duties to his satisfaction. The British Nurses' Association was started about three years ago, to provide an annual Register showing the names, addresses, and Hospital training of women who had been properly educated to perform the duties expected of attendants upon the sick, and providing also as a safeguard that anyone proving unworthy of trust should be removed from the list. He could conceive of nothing more simple or more harmless than this. The principle of Registration had prevailed largely in other professions, and had, indeed, been welcomed by those professions as a means of sifting those properly qualified and trained to perform their duties, from those who were not. At the end of their first year the Association determined to start the formation of a benevolent fund and other important financial schemes. In order that these schemes might be properly carried out, as they desired to hold property, &c., in trust, it was necessary that it should be done by legal authority, and the Board of Trade was applied to. Here arose a difficulty. When the Association went to the Board of Trade for permission to register under the Companies Act, omitting the word "Limited," they were politely told that this was impossible; but the President of the Board of Trade suggested that they should "make an application to the Privy Council for an inquiry, with a view to obtaining the powers they desired." Indeed, he actually went beyond this, for he promised his cordial support to the application. This meant that they should apply for a Royal Charter, which involves an inquiry by the Privy Council. That being the present position, the question before them was whether the General Practitioners' Alliance should give the Nurses' Association their support.

Before deciding one way or the other, it would be well to take a glance at the Association. To

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