

and reputation of the hospital which sends her out. It was further said (in the interests of the medical profession), that the granting of a sort of diploma to Nurses might lead many people to seek a Nurse in case of illness, and not a doctor; such a result, it was thought, would be injurious also to the interests of the Nurses themselves." May I pause here for a moment? It is said the Register only gives people information of where they can get that same evidence. Is the Register to be compulsory or not? They say not. Then what is the value of the Register? It must give information of something more than a hospital certificate. If it is merely to require a hospital certificate, that would be obtained by the Nurse having produced the hospital certificate. My learned friend said the Register would prevent incompetent Nurses passing themselves off on the public, because the Nurses would have to be registered. It cannot mean whether you possess the hospital certificate or not, because all the Register says, is there a hospital certificate; therefore I point out, whether you call it prestige your being connected with the Association, or whatever you call it, that taking the public, they will, from the fact that a well-managed Association continues a name on the register for a certain number of years, regard that Register as being equal to a certificate. The report continues "Under the existing system it is argued that the public have adequate protection in their power to call for a nurse's certificate before employing her, and to obtain particulars from the hospital which gave it her; that this security would, under the registration scheme, be lost, and the women, whom no hospital would recommend, would get themselves registered and appear to the public on the same level as the best nurses." I am going to call attention to opinions, which I think will be weighty on these matters, namely, the opinion of persons who have already given evidence upon this matter. It is a fact that under the Register, as contemplated by this charter, a person who presents a certificate of character, and hospital certificates, can be got on the register and will there remain, although the people in charge of the Register have no more means of judging of the case. There is nothing to show that this incorporated body when they are dealing with the qualifications of the persons they are going to register are to have a certificate of fitness for nurses' work, and may I remind your lordships of the extremely confidential character of the communications that must be made in this connection? A person may be most skilled in passing examination, may possibly be an extremely good character and yet may still be unfitted to discharge effectively and efficiently the duty of a Nurse. Surely also I am entitled to enforce by argument the conclusion that security under a registration scheme would be lost because people would not consult the hospitals or enquire as to the qualifications of the Nurses, but would believe that the managers of the Register had kept the names on the Register because they were authentic. The report continues: "A point very strongly urged is that the character of the woman herself is a most essential matter in regard to a Nurse; much more so in the case of a Nurse than a Doctor. The Association professes to require evidence of character (by production of recent testimonials) before it will put a Nurse on its Register, and to register only women who have had three years hospital training, but it appears that women are registered who have not completed their full period of training at any one hospital, and of whom it is not known whether they have proved themselves competent or otherwise." I do not want to refer to particular instances, but I believe it is a fact that on the numbers on the book (they say there are 1,700 on the book of the Association), a very considerable number,—several hundreds, in fact,—were registered when there were no restrictions as to qualifications, so that the Register would not represent anything like what I may call the minimum qualification that my learned friend, Sir Horace Davey,

suggests at the present time the managers of the Association desire to maintain. The report from which I have been quoting goes on "The Association complains that a hospital certificate, once given, cannot be withdrawn, whereas a name will be removed from the Register whenever a nurse is proved to have forfeited her good character, legal proof being admittedly exceedingly difficult. But it is evident that this course cannot be taken except on clear proof of actual crime or misconduct, and therefore it is no protection to the public from mere incompetency. It was admitted that a woman might go through three years training at a hospital, and get her certificate, and yet be a very indifferent nurse, and be known at the hospital to be so; but the public who read her name in the register clearly stated that it did not guarantee the efficiency of its Nurses. On the other hand, if the Association disclaims responsibility for the efficiency of the Nurses whom it registers, it seems difficult to understand wherein lies the security which it offers to the public. Mr Rathbone, speaking on behalf of the Nightingale Training School in opposition to the Association, quoted from a letter written by Miss Nightingale on this subject:—"You cannot select the good from the inferior Nurses by any test or system of examination. But most of all, and first of all, must their moral qualifications be made to stand pre-eminent in estimation. All this can only be secured by the current supervision, tests, or examinations, which they receive in their training school or hospital, not by any examination from a foreign body, like that proposed by the British Nurses' Association. Indeed, those who came off best in such would probably be the ready and forward, not the best Nurses." That, my lords, is of course directed to a scheme of wider scope, namely, one in which the Association should have the power to examine. I shall refer to that further on when I deal with the memorandum of Association which they presented to the Board of Trade, when they desired to get incorporated not by Royal Charter, but by a certificate of the Board of Trade dispensing with the word "Limited."

Now, may I ask your Lordships attention to another point for a few moments.

LORD HOBHOUSE: Is this the opinion of the Committee that you have been quoting?

SIR R. WEBSTER: It is from the report of the Committee. They state the two sides, and then they draw their conclusions.

LORD OXENBRIDGE: Who were the members of the Committee.

SIR R. WEBSTER: On page 4 I think you will find the full list:—The Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, Earl Cadogan (Lord Privy Seal), Earl of Winchelsea and Nottingham, Earl of Lauderdale, Earl Spencer, Earl Cathcart, Earl of Kimberley, Lord Zouche of Haryngworth, Lord Clifford of Chudleigh, Lord Sandhurst, Lord Fermanagh, Lord Lamington, Lord Sudley, Lord Monkswell, and Lord Thring. Now, Lord Hobhouse asks me whether what I have been reading was the conclusions of the Committee or a statement of the arguments.

LORD HOBHOUSE: They have stated so much.

SIR R. WEBSTER: Not the less valuable for the purpose of assisting your Lordships. But when the report was made, my lords, it appeared in effect as I have read it, adopting the view that registration was for these reasons desired. But permit me to follow up the matter which occurred to my mind. Is this registration to be compulsory? It appears to me to be not, and if not, then it is to be optional. That is to say, a nurse shall register if she pleases. Now, what is to be the effect of the optional registration and the supposed supervision by the officers of the Association? Must it not mean this; that the nurse whose name appears on the Register has satisfied the Committee that her name ought to be kept on the Register.

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