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EDITED BY MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK, REGISTERED NURSE.

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EDITORIAL.

AN HISTORIC OCCASION.

December 7th, 1887, must be recorded as an historic occasion. On that date a group of conscientious Matrons accepted the invitation of Dr. and Mrs. Bedford Fenwick to meet at 20, Upper Wimpole Street, London, W.1, and consider the organisation of Nursing as a Statutory profession, as the knowledge and skill exercised by an increasing number of highly educated proficient women as Certificated Nurses of the sick had evolved into a great national asset of which there was no statutory recognition whatever.

This meeting must be recognised as a great historic occasion, and, seated in the Chair, with Isla Stewart, Matron of St. Bartholomew's Hospital on our right, and Catherine Wood, Lady Superintendent of the Children's Hospital, Great Ormond Street, on our left, and about 30 colleagues present, we listened to the advice addressed to us with so much generosity of feeling by Bedford Fenwick, who advised us to unite, enlist the sympathy of the Medical Profession, and, as the British Nurses' Association, appeal to Parliament for legal status.

It was a meeting of women inspired by the keenest professional sense of responsibility, and we then and there assumed the title of "British Nurses' Association," and parted full of hope and determination to rouse our colleagues to demand from Parliament the title of "State Registered Nurse."

Those were the days when no obstacle appeared unsurmountable and when we were prepared to give untiring work and generous financial support in aid of the demand for legal status. Alas! little did we realise the power and persistence of the forthcoming 30 years' war our just demand would arouse in those availing themselves of our economic skill in 1887, and it was not until 1919 that our just claim was conceded by Parliament by the passing of the three Nurses Registration Acts for England and Wales, for Scotland, and for Ireland. These Acts provided a liberal majority on the Governing Council for the Registered Nurses and were self-supporting, the nurses having financed entirely their professional Acts of Parliament to well over a million pounds at the present time.

But to return to 1887. Having formed the British Nurses' Association, to which Queen Victoria granted a Royal Charter in 1892—the first, we believe, to professional British women—publicity for our cause had to be financed, and it was Dr. Bedford Fenwick who most generously for a quarter of a century maintained the campaign. He bought *The Nursing Record* (THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING) from Messrs. Sampson,

Low and Marston, and kept us a voice in the Press for the rest of his life, in spite of the commercial organs making thousands of pounds annually through their opposition policy.

The education of members of the Houses of Lords and of Commons in the Registration of Nurses question took 30 years. From 1889 to 1919 we haunted the precincts of both Houses year after year. We calculated the appeal cost £20,000, to which Dr. Bedford Fenwick contributed £12,000! (£400 a year) to maintain our organ in support of State Registration of Nurses, which became law in 1919. His death took place in October, 1939, so that he was mercifully spared the knowledge of the depreciation of standards of Nursing through the Brown-Bevin Act in 1943.

Some day, we are quite sure the efficiency and status of the Registered Nurse will be restored; the devotion of those who promoted and paid for reform will be realised; the health of the community will be safeguarded; and the Bedford Fenwick Nurse Scholars will help to uphold the flag of efficiency.

MEMORIAL TO DR. BEDFORD FENWICK.

And now, after the passing of 60 years, a group of the *intelligentsia* in the Nursing Profession, members of the British College of Nurses, Ltd., have decided to found an International Nursing Scholarship in his name, which will materialise next year when the first "Bedford Fenwick Scholar" will attend the Congress of the International Council of Nurses to be held at Washington and Atlantic City, New York, in May, 1947. This Scholar will present a report of the proceedings, to be published in THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING upon her return.

We anticipate this Report will, when presented and filed in the History Section of the College, add a page to Nursing history of academic value.

The most valiant member of the Medical Profession to associate himself with the *just* claims of Trained Nurses, it is well that the generosity of Bedford Fenwick should be recognised and perpetuated.

A PEOPLE GREAT AND STRONG

*Not gold, but only men can make
A people great and strong;
Men who for truth and honour's sake
Stand fast and suffer long.*

*Brave men who work while others sleep,
Who dare while others fly
They build a nation's pillars deep
And lift them to the sky.*

EMERSON.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)