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Editorial.

A Challenge to the Nursing Profession.

IT WAS with the greatest interest and admiration that we learned through the daily Press—the Manchester Guardian—of the courageous crusade led by Miss Gladys Goodchild, S.R.N., Matron of the Christie Hospital and Holt Radium Institute at Manchester—strongly protesting against a Ministry of Health circular instructing hospitals to recognise the grade of nursing auxiliary as a person “who is engaged wholly or mainly on nursing duties” even though the person has no recognised nursing or midwifery qualification, and is not a student nurse, a pupil midwife, or a pupil assistant nurse.

In her protest Miss Goodchild holds that “This circular is a contravention of the Nurses Act of Parliament of 1943, one of the main objects of which was to ensure that the public should be protected from unqualified persons representing themselves as nurses. I solemnly declare to the nursing profession and to the public that this further desperate gamble to cover a deficiency is leading us inevitably to a second ‘black’ age of nursing.” Having protested to the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Health, and the Royal College of Nursing, continued—“I am firing every weapon I can because the matter is of such vital interest particularly to the patients in our hospitals and to our qualified nurses. With the creation of new grades such as this, patients will be looked after by people completely unqualified as nurses. Everyone knows our hospitals are desperately short of qualified nurses—but this up-grading of persons is in my opinion the greatest deterrent to recruitment there has been for years. Wider and wider is becoming the entry into the profession through back-door channels. The Lamp indeed, needs trimming.”

Here we would point out that the 1943 Act was also the contravention of the 1919 Nurses Act, when a lower grade of efficiency was given state recognition under the state enrolment of assistant nurses.

But for that 1943 Act, which abolished the one Portal entrance, Miss Goodchild would not now be fighting against this invasion of unqualified persons. Although the assistant nurse is a person who may not wish to become a registered nurse or one who fails to reach the professional standard required, today there are many thousands of these half-trained nurses who as a result of their state recognition and a growing policy of appeasement, compete in the world market with the Registered Nurse, economically, and also claim her privileges even to the right of admittance to the Inter-

national Council of Nurses Congresses. As Mr. C. Vipont-Brown, the Hon. Secretary of the British Medical Association, Manchester, aptly states in supporting Miss Goodchild, “the idea of solving this problem by diluting the profession with auxiliaries who can earn similar remuneration without undergoing the training necessary for qualification is preposterous.” As we have always held justice is the solution; the one Portal entrance only to the nursing profession; no state recognition of a lower standard of efficiency or of the numerous auxiliaries whom we are told the Minister did not create nevertheless he instructs recognition of them. We are also informed that under the Nurses Act of 1953 the title “Nurse” is fully protected. Yet the title of Nursing is attached to all and sundry unqualified persons. We consider that Miss Goodchild is entitled to the support of all authorities responsible for the education and registration of nurses.

It is to be hoped that Matrons and Registered Nurses will rise in support of Miss Goodchild’s crusade to call a halt to the depreciation of nursing standards—but fear that members of the profession in authority are timid in the face of misguided popular opinion.

A. S. B.

National Association for Mental Health.

Lord Memorial Essay Competition, 1955.

THIS COMPETITION IS OPEN to Nurses fulfilling the conditions set out below, and essays of not less than 1,500 and not more than 2,000 words are invited on the following subject:—

“What effects on Mental Nursing have resulted from the changing types of patient and conditions in Mental and Mental Deficiency Hospitals.”

Awards.

A PRIZE of £5, and a MEDAL, will be awarded for the best essay from a qualified Nurse, and

A SPECIAL PRIZE of £3, with a Certificate, for the best essay from a Student Nurse.

Conditions

Competitors must be engaged in work with cases of mental disorder, or mental deficiency, whether in mental hospitals, mental deficiency hospitals, psychiatric clinics and/or allied psychiatric services, and in addition must hold either—

- (a) The Certificate issued by the General Nursing Council for Nurses on the Register for Mental Nurses or the Register for Nurses for Mental Defectives; or
- (b) The R.M.P.A. Certificates of Proficiency in Mental Nursing and in the nursing of Mental Defectives;
- or (c) Be a Student Nurse in training in this field of work.

THE CLOSING DATE FOR ENTRIES IS SEPTEMBER 30TH, 1955.

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