

taken at the last two Meetings of the General Council. And, as the officials, on the proposition of Mr. Fardon of the Middlesex Hospital, have now deliberately broken through the arrangement made with the ex-officio members of the Executive Committee—that they should have permanent seats upon the Registration Board—it will be impossible for those thus removed to protect the interests of Nurses at future meetings of that Board. If, therefore, it be determined that action is necessary to prevent any particular scheme being carried out, in reference to the Registration of mental Nurses, it must be clearly understood that such proceedings must be taken by those Nurses who may consider themselves aggrieved or injured from a pecuniary point of view.

The matter, at present stands as follows: The Royal Charter gives to the Executive Committee the power to appoint "such Sub-Committees . . . as from time to time shall seem expedient." The General Council, on the other hand, has, under the Charter or Bye-laws, no authority to, and it is entirely without precedent that it should, appoint a Sub-Committee of its own to consider any matter not referred to it by the Executive Committee. But, at the General Council Meeting last July, a small Sub-Committee was appointed by the Council to consider and report upon an entirely new departure, viz., the question of the admission of mental Nurses, as such, to Registration and Membership of the Association. Such a matter, involving as it does such large and important issues, should, according to custom, have been brought first before the Executive Committee. And as a matter of courtesy—which would of course have been followed in other Associations—the proposition should then have been referred, at once, for consideration and report to the standing Sub-Committee delegated to deal with such matters—that is to say, in this case, to the Registration Board. In this question of mental Nurses, the officials ignored the Executive Committee, and they ignored the Registration Board. It remains to be seen whether their action was merely irregular and discourteous, or whether it was dictated by their desire to prevent the scheme being criticised and, perhaps, condemned.

The Report of this Sub-Committee then, was brought last month before a Council largely composed, as we have already shown it is, of Nurses from the Middlesex Hospital;

and the Report was adopted without the slightest discussion on the part of the members. It proposed that women who have been engaged in Asylums for the Insane for a period of three years should be eligible for Registration and therefore for membership of the Association; and, in supporting the adoption of this suggestion, great stress was laid by the officials upon the possibility that mental Nurses would, in large numbers, avail themselves of the privilege and status thus offered to them; and that they would thus greatly assist the much-embarrassed finances by their guinea fees for Registration. The argument appears to us to be very significant; but whether it is conclusive or even conducive to the welfare of the Association is open to doubt. Our object has always been to bring about improvements in the Nursing of the sick; and if it could be proved that, by the Registration of mental Nurses, such improvements could be effected without grave injustice either to the public or to the Nurses who are already Registered, we would gladly give the scheme our whole-hearted and most active support.

But, how does the matter stand? On the one hand, we have many hundreds of well-trained Nurses who have paid the Registration Board of the Royal British Nurses' Association for the privilege of having their names inserted upon the Register of Trained Nurses—that is to say, upon a list of women who have passed through a definite and extended period of Hospital training. The Registration Board have publicly pledged themselves to maintain this standard, as a guarantee to the public that those whose names appear on the Register are persons who have obtained that definite amount of technical training. The Association, therefore, has entered into an honourable agreement with the public, on the one side, to maintain that guarantee, and with the Registered Nurses, on the other, to maintain their privileges intact. It would, therefore, evidently be dishonourable on the part of the Association to infringe, in the slightest degree, the contract thus made with either party; and while previous experience unhappily does not impress us with a firm conviction that this argument will be held of much account, it may, at any rate, be urged that it would be foolish to break faith with the public, however badly the Nurses might be treated. But as we shall show, next week, such a contingency is, at any rate, possible under the scheme as it at present stands.

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