

nursing to persons who have passed prescribed examinations, and, further, certificates in special branches of nursing. They evidently consider themselves competent "to institute and to conduct examinations for such purposes," and even "to prescribe courses of study" which nurses shall undergo. Still more serious is their avowed intention to make and maintain a Register of certificated nurses, and to remove from such Register "the name of any person as the Society may in its discretion think proper." Incidentally, they propose to take legal proceedings against nurses pretending to be certificated by the Society, to maintain and provide lecture halls and rooms and courses of lectures for nurses; and to publish a newspaper or magazine. It will be obvious to all professional people that any laxity or error in carrying out this programme would mean sending out to the public, as certificated nurses, persons who were not competent for the very responsible duties nurses have to fulfil. As the scheme, on the face of it, emanates from unprofessional persons, it is almost certain that such laxity and mistakes would take place, and the dangers of the scheme to the public cannot therefore be exaggerated.

THE PUBLIC.

This danger, of course, consists primarily in the fact that unprofessional persons propose to define professional standards and to afford a guarantee of the efficiency of a most responsible body of workers. Would the community be satisfied if the educational standard of the medical profession were determined by laymen? It is inconceivable that they would tolerate for a moment the assumption by them of such a duty.

THE MEDICAL PROFESSION.

So far as the medical profession is concerned, the scheme implies that participation in the education and control of nurses is to be taken out of the hands of the former and placed absolutely in those of laymen, a result which we cannot believe the medical profession in this country will for a moment sanction.

Assuming that medical practitioners are accorded seats on the Council which it is provided shall manage the affairs of the Society, what will be their position on that Council?

In the first place, they will take their seats, not as the representatives of members of their own profession, but as the nominees of the Council, and in the second place, by Article 42:—

"The Society may by Extraordinary Resolution remove any member of the Council before the expiration of his period of office, and may, by Ordinary Resolution, appoint another qualified person in his stead."

What independence of action could a medical man have under these circumstances, and what men, eminent in their profession, would accept so undignified a position?

NURSES.

So far as the nursing profession is concerned, the objects of this Society, if carried out, would place any nurse whose name was on the Register entirely at the mercy of the Society. Indeed, it is definitely provided that any three members of the Council could take a nurse's name off the Register for any reason whatsoever—or, for the matter of that, without any reason whatever.

The power asked for to remove from the Register the name or names of any person or persons *as the Society may in its discretion think proper* at once stamps it as a danger to all nurses. The Articles of Association show that three, or at a deferred meeting of the Council *two*, members can exercise this power, without giving the nurse concerned any opportunity of being heard in her own defence.

The difference between the autocratic power asked for by laymen in relation to trained nurses, and the way in which nurses safeguarded the interests of their colleagues under the original Bye-Laws of the Royal British Nurses' Association is significant.

It must be realised that this power of removal involves not, as in the case of a club, the elimination of an uncongenial member, but that it amounts to the removal of a woman from the profession for which she has qualified herself by years of hard work, and by means of which she earns her livelihood.

The Bye-Law drawn up by the nurses themselves in relation to the removal of unworthy members from their calling was as follows:—

"The Executive Committee shall have power to direct that the name of any nurse who shall, after full inquiry, appear to a majority of two-thirds of a meeting of the Committee unworthy to remain thereon, be erased from the list. But no name shall be erased for this cause except by order of a meeting specially summoned to consider the matter, and at this meeting *fifteen* shall be the necessary quorum. Provided always, that any nurse whose name it is proposed to remove shall have the right to appear in person, or by proxy, to show cause why such erasure should not take place, and shall, moreover, have the right to demand that, before her name is erased, the matter should be referred to a meeting of the General Council, whose decision shall be final."

The above provision shows how seriously nurses regard removal from a professional Register.

Is it conceivable that they will place themselves under the authority of a Society which makes them absolutely defenceless and voiceless from a professional point of view?

THE NURSING SCHOOLS.

So far as the Nurse-Training Schools are concerned, the irony of the scheme is that the Schools which are graciously approved by this Society would be absolutely under the heel of the twelve persons who form the Council of the Society, for they are entirely excluded from representation or power on the Council. It is impossible to believe that the great hospitals of this country will consent to be placed

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)