

LAY CONTROL OF THE NURSING PROFESSION.

The following letter has been addressed to the Chairmen of Hospitals and Infirmaries by the Hon. Arthur Stanley, M.P. We publish it, as it is a document trained nurses should carefully consider.

THE COLLEGE OF NURSING, LIMITED,
83, PALL MALL,
LONDON, S.W.

DEAR SIR,—The response to the letter which I addressed on the 1st instant to many of the Hospitals, Infirmaries, and Nurse-Training Schools throughout the country was so prompt and widespread that at the Conference held a week later at St. Thomas's Hospital more than two hundred representatives were present from England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland. I then took the opportunity of explaining the circumstances which led to the establishment of the College of Nursing, and I laid stress upon the desire of the Council to form as speedily as possible such a Consultative Board as would be representative of all parts of the United Kingdom and of all branches of Nursing.

The Council has learnt with regret that, as through unavoidable reasons the notice I was able to give of the Conference was somewhat short and some of the letters miscarried, many Nursing Authorities failed to receive my communication in time to take formal action upon it. I am, therefore, desired to give expression to the earnest hope of the Council that your Board of Management may be pleased *within the next month* to nominate not more than two Representatives upon the Consultative Board of the College, and, as some guide to the lines on which we are working, I am amplifying certain points in the constitution of the College to which allusion only was made in my letter of 30th December, 1915.

To the reasons which induced me to lay before the Managers of Hospitals and Infirmaries proposals for the establishment of a College of Nursing at the time I did I need not recur, but I ought perhaps to say that, whilst it was originally my intention to ask the Board of Trade to register the College without the word "Limited," I found on enquiry that such a proceeding would lead to probable difficulties and to certain delay, which it was my object to avoid. Accordingly, the signing of the Memorandum and the Articles of Association became largely a formal matter, and the original Council of 15 appointed by the Signatories has already been increased by co-optation to 23, and may be further enlarged up to 30 members. A list of the present Council is enclosed herewith, and I shall be glad also to furnish on application a copy of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, which it should be remembered have, in accordance with the usual practice in these cases, been drawn so as to give the widest possible powers, and not as a precise

indication of the present or future policy of the College.

As I stated in my original letter, we have for the time at least to rely upon a voluntary scheme of co-operation amongst the Nurse-Training Schools throughout the Kingdom, but, concurrently with the activities of the College as regards the training and certification of Nurses and other women-workers in hospitals, opportunities will be taken for friendly conference on the one hand with those who are altogether averse to State interference and on the other with those Societies whose primary object is the registration of Nurses by Act of Parliament. To meet Representatives of such Societies a Registration Committee has already been appointed, and, whilst it would be idle to ignore the many difficulties which have to be overcome before the Nursing Profession wins the legal recognition it deserves, no one will rejoice more heartily than myself when, as the outcome of our common efforts, such a degree of substantial unanimity has been reached within the ranks as to enable us to present to Parliament an agreed Bill to gain legal status for the results attained by the combined activities of all who, working at present on different lines, have as their one objective the betterment of the Nursing Profession. In these aims I feel assured that we can rely upon the sympathy and all-important help of the Medical Profession with which nursing is so closely allied.

Another point upon which I have laid emphasis is that the College is ultimately to be self-governing. Primarily, it is true, the scheme is based upon the co-operation of the Matrons and Lady Superintendents of the leading Nursing Schools, whose knowledge and experience in matters of curriculum and examination, supported and amplified by the work of the Consultative and Examination Boards, are made use of to initiate the undertaking. Accordingly the original Council has been thus nominated and co-opted, but in 1918, and every year afterwards, one-third of the members retire from office, and vacancies are filled by the votes of the Members of the College, i.e., from the general body of Nurses upon the Register. To ensure for them an effective influence in the result there is provision for a postal vote, not dependent upon personal attendance at the Annual Ordinary Meeting at which elections to the Council are made. Whilst, therefore, the College in its early years will be largely guided by the experience of the Heads of the various Training Schools who form a majority of the first Council, it will, when it attains maturity, become broad-based and democratic in constitution.

The third and fourth points upon which I have insisted are: uniformity of curriculum, and the one-portal system of examination, and it is just in these matters that the Council feels the urgent necessity of help and counsel from Nursing Schools, from the Medical Profession, from

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