

THE REGISTRATION OF SPECIALISTS.

Now that there is a very great danger of the nursing profession being almost entirely governed by the laity, and those who employ nurses in and out of hospitals, it is not surprising to find those who have for years upheld the lowest standards of training, and consequently of efficiency, rushing in "where angels fear to tread," and the organizers of cottage and village nursing must, we fear, be classed amongst those who have done much to injure not only the professional status but the economic condition of district nurses.

Miss Broadwood, Director of the Cottage Benefit Nursing Association, and Miss F. C. Joseph, the Hon. Secretary of the Public Health Sectional Committee, National Union of Women Workers, are inviting selected members of the nursing profession and others to meet the General Council of the former Society at Denison Hall, 296, Vauxhall Bridge Road, S.W., on June 14th, at 2.30 p.m., to discuss "how the College of Nursing may affect cottage, village and district nurses, and those to whom they minister amongst the rural population." Miss Joseph will explain her scheme for "A suggested basis for a Scheme for the Registration of Nurses." What qualifications this lady possesses for assuming the right to define the training and educational curriculum and system of registration for the nursing profession is a mystery to experienced members of that profession, but at the present crisis numerous schemes will in all probability be put forward for our control, especially by those interested in providing the poor with charitable aid—for which the promoters are seldom willing to provide sound financial support. We presume the Scheme to be considered on June 14th is the same brought forward by Miss Joseph on April 12th before the Public Health Sectional Committee, N.U.W.W., after which an emergency meeting was hurriedly summoned on April 15th (a notice of which failed to reach us as the representative of the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses), at which a deputation was nominated to interview the Council of the College of Nursing, and from which the trained nurses on the Committee were all excluded. Miss Joseph's scheme is for the State Registration of Specialists, and for some branches she considers that hospital training is not necessarily the best experience for their work, although she goes as far as to state that "the object of training should surely be to fit the individual for her job." She considers that the nursing profession is analogous to the teaching profession, and "that has been organised and registered, and on its Register are University, Secondary, Elementary and Special Subjects Teachers. They are all recognised as belonging to the Teaching Profession, and all have to come up to Standard and pass the examination of their own class, but their province is quite distinct. It is not contended that no one but a University Teacher is to instruct an Elementary School child, so why should it be said that no one but a three-

year trained hospital nurse is fit to tend a sick person? It should surely be possible, if outside examinations are made compulsory, for there to be different classes of nurses for different work, and they should be able to graduate as Hospital Nurse, Village District Nurse, Mental Nurse, Tuberculosis Nurse and so on." This argument is in our opinion entirely fallacious. There is no comparison between the treatment of the whole body and the cultivation of the mind. There are elementary teachers for undeveloped minds, and secondary and university teachers as the mind develops, but the body is anatomically defined from birth. The general principles of the theory and practice of nursing must be acquired by every nurse before she can safely specialise in the care of any form of disease, thus to argue that "Hospital Nurses, Village District Nurses, Mental Nurses, and Tuberculosis Nurses and so on" should all be registered in classes presupposes that a knowledge of the *general principles of the theory and practice of nursing* is not necessary for specialists—a very unsound and dangerous proposition.

What is the object of hospital training except to afford the indispensable clinical experience, without which theoretical knowledge in relation to the care of the sick is a danger? Hospital training is merely a means to an end, and that end is to lay a safe foundation of general nursing knowledge. Having acquired this the nurse can specialise. But it is futile to suppose that she can safely do so without it, because the body cannot be divided into its component parts and nursed in sections, but must be cared for as a whole.

Miss Joseph argues that "if professional recognition is limited to women with three years' training in certain hospitals, we shall injure health work throughout the country. . . . There are not sufficient of the three years' hospital trained women, nor are they suited or willing, to undertake much of the work that is being done by those with different and specialised training to fit them for their jobs. But these women will cease to come forward if they find that they are to be debarred from professional status; or if they come forward they will still be a thorn in the side of the hospital-trained nurse, and the present condition of discord will be perpetuated."

The fact is that uneducated, semi-trained nurses are now provided for the poor in rural districts because they are cheap, and a system of sweating has for years been permitted, if not enforced, by the laity who organize and control such nurses in the name of charity. We want to alter all such indefensible methods, and that cannot be done if a system is inaugurated by the College of Nursing, or any other body, which recognises semi-trained specialists for the poor and provides thoroughly trained women for those who can afford to pay for them. The Medical Acts make it compulsory that a medical practitioner shall attain a safe standard of knowledge—upon which he can specialise if he pleases—before he is regis-

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