

THE PROPOSED ROYAL BRITISH COLLEGE OF NURSING.

MUSINGS AND MORALS.

At the meeting held in London on January 18th last, at which it was agreed to apply to the Privy Council for a Supplemental Charter, to amalgamate the R.B.N.A. and the College of Nursing, Limited, the proceedings were, of course, perfunctory—only the resolution to amalgamate being open to discussion—the Clauses of the proposed Supplemental Charter and new Bye-laws were not presumably before the meeting for discussion, as they were never referred to, and not one nurse member present asked a question of any sort whatever!

It may be as well, therefore, to make a few remarks concerning the powers and purposes of the proposed Royal British College of Nursing.

EXTENSION OF PURPOSES AND POWERS.

Clause (a) makes it possible to organize any branch of women's work connected with Hospitals, other than trained nursing—and provides for the inclusion presumably of ward-maids, house-keepers, cooks, domestic workers, laundry workers, V.A.D. workers, sanitary inspectors, nursery nurses, welfare workers and masseuses, &c. The majority of these workers already have their own special teaching centres, examinations, and certificates—so that why a Royal College of Nursing should be empowered to teach and control them is not at once apparent.

Clause (b) provides for "a uniform curriculum and standard of qualification," but as (c) provides for the "institution of examinations and the grant of Diplomas and Certificates of Proficiency in Nursing, or any branch of Nursing, the second clause apparently contradicts the first.

(e) Takes power "to promote legislation for the State recognition of and protection of the official Register."

We do not wish for "State recognition" of the College Register. We demand State Registration and the protection of the title "Registered Nurse" by Parliament setting up a Statutory Authority to manage the Nursing Profession—analogue to the General Medical Council in its relation to the medical profession—that is, we want an Independent Governing Body set up by Act of Parliament, on which the registered nurses have adequate and *direct* representation—and which shall not be controlled by the Nursing Schools acting through their officials and the laity. The Nursing Profession, once trained and registered, must have economic independence—this is the principle at issue in the Bills drafted by the Central Committee and the College—it is vital and imperative, and trained nurses will be wise to fight for it and against any form of legislation which does not concede it.

THE CONSTITUTION.

The Constitution of the Royal College is to be autocratic—(1) a Royal President with power of

"command"; (2) a Council of 45 nominated persons, composed of the laity, medical practitioners and nurses, qualified and partially qualified. This nominated body will hold office for two years and will make all the Rules and Regulations the Nurse members have to obey. "The Council may delegate any of their powers to a committee or committees of members, with or without any other persons not members of the Council."

Thus a Scottish Board has been set up to control Scottish Nurses, composed of seven chairmen of hospitals and committees, seven medical superintendents and medical men, and nine Matrons, with a few Nurses co-opted.

English and Irish Boards of Control are proposed on the same official basis. Subjugation of the Nurses is thus inevitable. They are to be controlled by the Training Schools acting through these nominated Boards, when registered, *for life*.

NEW BYE LAWS.

Bye Law (3) provides that each person whose name is entered on the Register of Nurses must become a member of the College (and obey its rules) whether she wishes to do so or not. She must produce credentials of professional efficiency and good character.

4 (b) provides that the Council can elect as members of the Corporation any persons they choose. These persons need not presumably produce any qualifications of any sort whatever, either professional or personal, or pay anything as members of the Royal College of Nursing. The Nurses pay. Their Registration Fees are the only secured financial assets.

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETINGS.

Bye Law 8 emphasises the autocratic form of government for the nurse members. The Royal President may "order" a Special Meeting when she chooses.

The forty-five members of the Council may "order" a meeting when they choose, but the members of the Corporation are practically prevented from requisitioning such a meeting.

The Clause referring to them is as follows:—
"A Special General Meeting of the Corporation shall be summoned by the Chairman of the Council upon a requisition in writing signed by at least 100 members of the Corporation, and by not less than one-fourth of the Members of the Council then entitled to be present and vote at the meeting." In practice "one-fourth of the Council" would never be prepared to requisition a Special Meeting to enquire into their own conduct of business, so the members are securely prevented from exercising a right which the members of every free institution can claim. In this connection the past history of the R.B.N.A. is instructive.

The first Bye Laws of the Royal Charter provided that fifty members could requisition a special meeting—and strongly disapproving of the management in 1895, sixty-nine nurse members signed and sent in their requisition—when a quibble on the word "may" instead of "shall"

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