

THE ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION, AND THE COLLEGE OF NURSING, LIMITED.

The following letter appeared in the *Times* on the 8th inst. :—

THE STATUS OF NURSES.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

SIR,—I fear I must trespass on your kindness to allow me a little space for a reply to Dr. Paterson's letter of the 21st ult., in order that I may support my contention that the differences between the Supplemental Charter of the Royal British Nurses' Association as agreed between that Association and the College of Nursing, and the same document as amended by the Privy Council are immaterial.

Dr. Paterson contrasts the original Clause (b), which includes under the extended purposes of the Corporation, "the promotion of a uniform curriculum and standard of qualification," with the amended clause, "the promotion of equivalent curricula and standards of qualification for all classes of nurses." He omits to mention that the next Clause (c) of the Supplemental Charter, which was agreed between the Association and the College, about which there is no dispute, and in which the Privy Council made no alteration, expressly provides for the "institution and conduct of examinations and the grant of diplomas and certificates of proficiency in nursing, or any branch of nursing." All that the Privy Council, therefore, did as regards Clause (b) was to alter its phraseology the better to adapt it to Clause (c), since, if there are to be curricula and examinations and tests of proficiency in special branches of nursing, obviously there cannot be a uniform curriculum and a uniform standard, though there may be equivalent curricula and equivalent standards of qualification for all classes of nurses.

Dr. Paterson's second contention that the omission by the Privy Council of the word "official" before the word "register" in Clause (b), empowering the Corporation to "make and maintain an official register of persons qualified to act as nurses," is a substantial alteration, may be met by quoting the letter which the Clerk of the Privy Council wrote on this subject last June to the solicitor of the Royal British Nurses' Association. Sir Almeric FitzRoy remarks: "In the Draft Supplemental Charter, the use of the term may appear natural as applied to the Register of Nurses which is common to the two bodies proposed to be amalgamated." So it certainly appeared to us, and so the Council of the College of Nursing understood it. When, however, Sir Almeric continues, "but in the language which the Royal Charter puts into the King's mouth, the term can only suggest a State register," we raised no objection whatever to the omission, since we never contemplated anything so disingenuous as, by the use of the word official—quoting Sir Almeric again—"to anticipate the

judgment of Parliament and prejudice the question of an official Register of Nurses." And greatly as we deplore the subsequent action of Dr. Paterson's council in this matter, I do not believe that they themselves had any such thought at that time, particularly when I see that the very next Clause (e) of the Supplemental Charter specifically lays down as a further purpose of the Corporation the promotion of "legislation to provide for the State recognition of, and protection of, the official register."

Once more, therefore, I feel myself justified in maintaining that what the Privy Council did when they desired us to omit the word "official" does not alter the plain and natural meaning of the clause as it was agreed between the College and the Association; and, moreover, that the omission was immaterial, though fastened upon by Dr. Paterson and other members of the Royal British Nurses' Association as affording such justification as was possible for repudiating an agreement which had for other reasons become unacceptable.

I am, Sir, &c.,

ARTHUR STANLEY,

Chairman of the Council of the College of Nursing.

Mr. Herbert Paterson, Hon. Medical Secretary of the R.B.N.A., sends us a copy of his reply sent, but so far not inserted in the *Times* :—

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

MADAM,—Sir Arthur Stanley's letter of the 8th inst. is of the greatest interest to the Nursing Profession, as it makes clear a point on which definite information is desirable, *viz.*, that the Council of the College of Nursing do not attach vital importance to a uniform curriculum and a one portal examination, otherwise they would not have been prepared to accept the Supplemental Charter in its amended form.

It must be obvious that Clause (c) in the Supplemental Charter must be read as complementary to, but not contradictory to Clause (b). It is clear, therefore, that the grant of diplomas and certificates of proficiency in nursing, or any branch of nursing, would apply only to nurses who had already passed through the uniform curriculum and attained to the uniform standard of qualification referred to in Clause (b). In other words, under the Supplemental Charter in its original form, specialization, as is the case in the Medical Profession, came, not before, but after qualification.

As Sir Arthur points out, the Privy Council altered Clause (b), so as to allow specialization *before* qualification, so that with the Clause, as amended, it would be permissible for a nurse to qualify in some special branch of nursing without undergoing a general training in a general hospital and passing a general examination. This is not only a material, but a vital alteration, and one to which the Royal British Nurses' Association could not agree. Sir Arthur Stanley admits the alteration, and so confirms my contention.

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