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## EDITORIAL.

### THE DUTIES AND POWERS OF THE GENERAL NURSING COUNCILS.

The appointment by the Minister of Health of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, by the Scottish Board of Health in Scotland, and the Chief Secretary in Ireland, should make all nurses alert to understand what are the powers conferred by Parliament on their Governing Bodies in the Nursing Acts.

These are mainly (1) to form and keep a Register of Nurses for the Sick, (2) to define and maintain educational standards, (3) to regulate the conduct of the examinations which may be prescribed, and to regulate any matters ancillary to these examinations, such as the appointment of examiners, (4) to enforce discipline, (5) to issue certificates to registered nurses, (6) to make regulations in regard to the uniform and badge to be worn by registered nurses, and last but not least, to regulate the finances of the Council. The General Nursing Councils are, therefore, essentially educational and disciplinary bodies.

It is on these accounts that it is so important that the members of the Councils should include representatives of all sections of the Nursing Profession. In regard to the definition of educational standards and examinations, most important and responsible functions, it is presumable that the Matrons of Nurse-Training Schools and the medical members are those whose advice will be of the greatest value, but, where the discipline of members of the profession is concerned, the rank and file have the right to be represented, and it is essential that they should be. This is a point for which the nurses' societies organised in the Central Committee for the State Registration of Nurses have consistently contended.

It is therefore very satisfactory to find that in appointing the First General Nursing Council for England and Wales the Minister of Health has considered the representation of all sections of the profession, and we find represented upon it, among the sixteen nurses whom he has appointed, not only Matrons of Training Schools, but experienced and independent nurses. In matters of discipline it is the right of the accused to be judged by their peers, and registered nurses who in the future may be required to account for their actions to their Governing Body will have the assurance that working nurses will help to compose the Council which will consider questions of discipline. We may hope, however, that the disciplinary duties of the Councils will not be extensive.

In regard to a Central Examination the one thing of all others which nurses are longing for is a Central Examination for which all can enter on equal terms.

The question of finance is one of extreme importance, upon which the success or the reverse of the Council's work largely depends, and one of the most important duties of the first Nursing Councils will be to define a system of sound finance. This will be no easy matter for those who have had experience in organising and maintaining a Register of Nurses, estimated, before the war, that a two guinea fee would be required. The fee payable for registration in the case of existing nurses has been fixed at not more than £1 1s., which has only the purchasable value of 10s. 6d. at pre-war rates. The finances of the Councils will therefore need to be very carefully administered if the business is to be efficiently conducted, and their officials adequately paid. We have no doubt, however, that the Councils will address themselves to this problem during the all-important period of framing the rules, and endeavour to find a satisfactory *modus vivendi*.

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