

THE
BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,740.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 6, 1921.

Vol. LXVII

EDITORIAL.

PROFESSIONAL ENFRANCHISEMENT AND CONTROL.

The position conferred by Parliament on the General Nursing Councils in the United Kingdom is even now not well understood by many of those concerned in the employment or control of nurses. Thus a contemporary refers to the General Nursing Council for England and Wales as an "experimental body . . . presided over by Mr. Priestley." We desire, therefore, to emphasise the truth that the appointment by Parliament of this Statutory Body, on which the trained (soon to be the Registered) nurses of this Kingdom are in a substantial majority, is not an experiment but a revolution.

Trained nurses have not been striving for thirty-four years simply for the right to place their names on a Register. Had this been all they would not have met with the opposition with which they had to contend before they at length attained self-government. The demand underlying their claim was the right conferred on professions such as that of medicine, and of the legal and the teaching professions, to define their own standard of education, and to govern their own members. They were content to accept no less, preferring to wait until this just claim was granted. And they gained the reward of their forceful and patient persistence. The General Nursing Council is primarily an Educational Body, through which the nurses of the Kingdom have the right to direct their own lives. Nursing is no longer a domestic avocation but a profession. It will, no doubt, take a little while for employers of nurses, whether committees of voluntary hospitals, Poor Law Guardians, or members of lay committees employing and supplying nurses, to adjust their ideas to the new conditions. But it cannot be too clearly stated that Parliament has placed

upon the Profession of Nursing the duty of defining and maintaining its own standards, both of education and discipline, and that it has every intention of discharging its duty.

The General Nursing Council for England and Wales has shown no disposition to auto-cruacy in carrying out the powers conferred upon it. Thus in regard to the Syllabus of Nursing Education it took the wise step of sending it out in draft form to Hospital Committees, Boards of Guardians, and Professional Associations of Nurses, and, further, issued a cordial invitation to Matrons of Training Schools in both voluntary and State institutions to attend a Conference on the Draft Syllabus, an invitation which met with a most cordial response. Certain suggestions made at the Conference were subsequently incorporated in the Syllabus in its final form.

Again, when the Conference of Representatives of Boards of Guardians who have established Training Schools for Nurses expressed a desire to send a Deputation to interview the General Nursing Council, its request was immediately acceded to, and the Deputation received with the greatest courtesy.

The Council has shown itself very much alive to the difficulties with which the Nurse-Training Schools are confronted in adjusting their arrangements to the new order of things, and shown every disposition to deal sympathetically with them.

But in the final adjustment it must be remembered that authority as to the definition of standards of nursing education has passed from the hands of the laity to those of the Nursing Profession; just as the definition of standards of medical education is in the hands of the profession of medicine.

The Profession of Nursing is henceforth the adjudicator, the final judge, and the controlling power over the educational standards and discipline of its members.

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