

A SOPHISTICAL ADDRESS.

We publish below the chief items in the Election Address of Miss Cox-Davies, Matron of the Royal Free Hospital, in connection with her candidature for election to the General Nursing Council for England and Wales:—

WHO DOES MISS COX-DAVIES REPRESENT?

Who does Miss Cox-Davies represent? She writes:—

1. Though the Joint Committee, set up by three of our largest nurses' organisations are good enough to support my candidature, I am in no sense representing any one of these three Associations. I have always held the view that the nurse members on the General Nursing Council are there for the purpose of promoting the interests of the whole profession, and not to represent either any branch of nursing work or section of the workers.

N.B.—Miss Cox-Davies' name is put forward by a Joint Committee formed by the College of Nursing, Ltd., the Hospital Matrons' Association (practically the Matrons within the College fold), and the Poor Law Matrons' Association. If she does not propose to represent them, why accept nomination by them?

THE SYLLABUS OF TRAINING.

Concerning the Syllabus of Training she writes:—

2. In my opinion the Syllabus of Training is a model of the system of teaching which it must be our aim to establish in every training school, or group of affiliated schools, as soon as the conditions of the hospitals will enable us to do so. To endeavour to make such a Syllabus compulsory at the present moment would be to press very hardly on some hospitals—and there are many—where difficulties of finance, a nursing staff under strength, and lack of accommodation, have to be dealt with. But already the Syllabus, which a year ago was criticised and by many thought to be an impossible standard, is being gradually brought into force in the hospitals, and finding its own welcome place in our nurse-training schools. It is for us on the General Nursing Council to help, encourage, and build up our nursing profession, rather than overweight with drastic changes already heavily overburdened institutions, and thereby run the risk of endangering the well-being of the sick.

N.B.—Under the Nurses Registration Act, 1919, Registered Nurses have the right to a "prescribed training" in an institution approved by the Council.

The Nurse Training Schools must conform to the Act and give their pupils not as much, or as little, as they themselves consider desirable, but in accordance with a scheme defined by the General Nursing Council, and upon which candidates will be examined and approved by the Ministry of Health when they come up for the State Examination.

The Council has the duty enjoined upon it of defining a Rule in relation to "prescribed training" for the approval of the Minister of Health. It is not an optional matter to be regulated by expediency, and it is futile for a member of the Council to pretend that the Syllabus is a model of a system of teaching to be attained at some future time.

Parliament has decreed that probationers in training have a right to a Prescribed Scheme, and any pretence that the recognised Schools can evade it if they choose is flouting the provisions of the Nurses' Registration Act. Nursing Schools which will not conform to the law have no right to be recognised by the General Nursing Council, and Miss Cox-Davies' policy ignores

the right of the probationers in pandering to the autocracy of the Schools. At the same time we approve of all the consultation necessary with the Managers of the hospitals so that the first Prescribed Scheme may not impose impossible conditions.

THE COMPILATION OF THE REGISTER.

Concerning the record of certificates on the State Register Miss Cox-Davies writes:—

3. Perhaps no subject has been so misunderstood in some instances wilfully so, as the action taken by a section (of which I was one) of the General Nursing Council, regarding the actual compilation of the Register. We are all apt to forget that the prestige of the Register lies in the future, when, as a result of a standardised test, nurses will qualify to find their place thereon. To endeavour to establish the prestige of the present-day nurse, by emphasising her three years' certificate, can only be to the disadvantage of those older women who gained the best diploma possible at the time they trained. Even now with the regulations for admission becoming gradually more elastic, it is difficult to see how, if any standard at all is to be maintained, it will be possible to avoid disappointing some who, having worked for many years as practising nurses, still find themselves without the necessary qualifications for admission.

N.B.—The nominees of the College of Nursing, Ltd., gave no opportunity to the electorate (as the Independent Candidates did) to meet them, and question them, at a public meeting. Had Miss Cox-Davies done so there is no point on which she would have been more closely cross-questioned than her action in attempting to deprive Existing and Intermediate Nurses who possess certificates of training, of the record of those qualifications on the State Register.

We ask now, therefore, did she, or did she not, place the following Resolution on the Agenda for the meeting of the General Nursing Council, held on October 28th, 1921?

"That Nurses whose applications for registration comply with the Rules of the Council be registered simply as 'Existing' or 'Intermediate' Nurses, and that the word 'trained' be used for all alike, and that the word 'certificated' be reserved until such time as the future nurses are admitted to the Register as a result of State Examination."

It is recorded on the Minutes of the Council that she did.

It is further recorded in the Report of the Registration Committee presented to the Council on November 18th, that Miss Cox-Davies opposed a Resolution proposed by Miss Macdonald, "that in all cases where a nurse holds a certificate of training this shall be recorded in the qualification column of the State Register to be issued by the Council."

Any one whose judgment was so at fault that she did not realise what a grave economic damage she proposed to inflict on thousands of working nurses, must be prepared to justify her action to the electorate if she desires to be entrusted with participation in the serious decisions which the General Nursing Council is called upon to make.

APPLES OF DISCORD.

Miss Cox-Davies concludes with the pious hope that if re-elected to the Council she will see our profession in the near future on a firm, united, peaceful basis. If her hope is to be realised we suggest to her that she refrain from throwing into our midst apples of discord which arouse resentment and indignation amongst certificated nurses from one end of the country to the other.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)