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EDITORIAL.

NURSES' RIGHTS UNDER THE NURSES REGISTRATION ACTS.

No. 1.—PRESCRIBED TRAINING.

We wonder how many Registered Nurses have read the Nurses' Registration Acts of 1919. We fear not many; as a rule nurses do not concern themselves with Acts of Parliament, and yet it is most important that they should possess and study the Acts under which their profession is governed, so that they may understand the duties imposed, and the rights conferred, upon them by those Acts.

One of the most important rights, granted to the nursing profession under the above Acts, is the right to a prescribed training.

Section 3, Subsection (2), of the Nurses' Registration Act, 1919, provides:—

“ Rules under this section shall contain provisions: (a) requiring as a condition of the admission of any person to the register that that person shall have undergone the PRESCRIBED TRAINING and shall possess the prescribed experience in the nursing of the sick; ” and “ (b) requiring that the prescribed training shall be carried out either in an institution approved by the Council . . . or in the service of the Admiralty, the Army Council or the Air Council. ”

Subsection (3) provides that “ Rules made under this section shall not come into operation unless and until they are approved by the Minister of Health. ”

The adoption of a “ prescribed training ” is therefore not a matter upon which there is any question. It is the duty of the General Nursing Councils to carry out the Nurses' Registration Acts in this, as in other, particulars. How important it was that this provision should be incorporated in the Acts, those who framed them thoroughly realised.

In the first place, it is most important that an efficient scheme of training should be prescribed, and enforced, so that the public may be supplied with nurses well equipped for their most responsible duties.

And, in the second place, it is of the highest

importance to a woman who enters a hospital for training, that if she devotes three of the best years of her life to learning her work, she shall be certain that she will have the opportunity of doing so theoretically and practically.

In the past this has not been the case. Probationers have over and over again bound themselves to serve the authorities of a hospital for three years, only to find at the end of that time their training has been so insufficient that either they have to enter another hospital for training, or to be handicapped for the rest of their professional careers by the insufficiency of the training they have received.

It was of the first importance, therefore, that the Acts should provide for a standardised curriculum of training, and that this curriculum should not be a model to be adopted, or not, at will, by the training schools, but should have the force of a Rule, approved by the Minister of Health, and agreed to by Parliament, and that the approval of nurse-training schools, connected with hospitals, or groups of hospitals, should be conditional upon their adoption of the prescribed curriculum of training.

In regard to the “ prescribed training ” for the nurses registered on the Supplementary Registers there has been little or no opposition.

In the case of the nurses registered on the General Part of the Register there has been a small amount of opposition on the part of certain hospital and poor law authorities to a compulsory curriculum of prescribed training, and the General Nursing Council, having spent some sixteen months in framing a scheme, which it believed to be practicable and sufficient, has shown most deplorable weakness and vacillation in regard to its enforcement.

At its meeting on December 15th it, however, agreed, on the motion of Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, “ That the Minister of Health be invited at once to sign the Syllabus unanimously agreed to by this Council to carry into effect Section 3 of the Nurses' Registration Act (2) (a) and (b), ” and that is where the matter now stands.

Even if the Minister of Health, in the light of criticism which has reached him, con-

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