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## EDITORIAL.

### ARE WE A PROFESSION OR ARE WE NOT?

It has been the duty of this Journal on many occasions to sound the trumpet call to arms, and we now have to warn Registered Nurses of a danger which in the immediate future threatens, not only their professional status, but their economic conditions.

The *British Medical Journal* of April 28th, under the heading "Medical Notes in Parliament," makes the following announcement:—

#### PARLIAMENTARY MEDICAL COMMITTEE.

"At a meeting on April 23rd of the Parliamentary Medical Committee, of which Dr. F. E. Fremantle is Chairman, and Sir Sydney Russell-Wells secretary, it was decided to appoint a sub-committee of five members to represent to the Minister of Health the desirability of widening the power of access to the first Register for existing nurses on terms suggested by Dr. Chapple, as follow:

The Council may accept for registration upon the first register of nurses any applicant who presents—

- (a) A certificate of good character;
- (b) A certificate signed by the Matron of a General Hospital, or by two medical men setting out that the applicant has been in attendance upon the sick in the capacity of a nurse for a period of not less than three years prior to November 1st, 1919; and
- (c) A certificate signed by three medical men (one of whom shall be on the staff of a general hospital) setting out that the applicant has adequate knowledge and experience of medical and surgical nursing, and is competent to attend upon the sick in the capacity of a nurse.

Provided that the Council may require the nurse as a condition precedent to registration to present herself for special examination as to competency and fitness before a medical officer or officers appointed by the Council.

The Sub-Committee was also asked to suggest to the Government the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into the dissatisfaction in the nursing profession owing to the failure of the Registration Act to function in a number of respects."

Before this notice appeared both the Royal British Nurses' Association and the Registered Nurses' Parliamentary Council had asked the Parliamentary Medical Committee to receive deputations from these bodies, in order to place before them the considered opinions of professional nurses.

Parliament has now granted to nurses the legal status of a profession, and, before another profession proposes to interfere, the nursing profession has a right to be consulted. In our opinion, the Parliamentary Medical Committee, before taking any action in regard to depreciating the standard for registration, should have consulted the General Nursing Council of England and Wales, and ascertained its views on this question. It should further have consulted the Nurses' Organisations.

It must be remembered that the Nurses' Registration Act is permissive, not obligatory, and anyone may practise as a nurse provided she does not use the title of Registered Nurse. That the Act is primarily for the protection of the sick must not be lost sight of, and if a Registered Nurse is employed, then that fact carries with it the guarantee of the State that she has "adequate knowledge and experience of the nursing of the sick."

But the nurses who have conscientiously qualified themselves to attend upon the sick public have also rights under the Act, and some 20,000 have placed their names on the State Register on the guarantee that the minimum of one year's general training would be required for the General Part of the Register. The effect of the recommendation of the Parliamentary Medical Committee, if adopted, would be that the Register of Nurses might be flooded with V.A.D.s, Village Nurses, and Cottage Nurses, to the danger of the public, and to the certain ruin of many Registered Nurses.

Who is responsible for this attempt to ruin the standard of the State Register? We know that the Council of the College of Nursing, Ltd., has been working surreptitiously to this end, and we recognise that its Chairman, the Hon. Sir Arthur Stanley, and its Hon. Secre-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)