

PARLIAMENTARY MEDICAL COMMITTEE, HOUSE OF COMMONS, AND REGISTRATION OF NURSES.

In reference to the proposals of the Parliamentary Medical Committee—that persons without any hospital training should be placed on the General Part of the Register, which appeared in the *British Medical Journal* of April 28th—the following letter from the Medical Chairman of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales appears in last week's issue:—

REGISTRATION OF NURSES.

SIR,—You published in your issue of April 28th (p. 740) a set of rules for the registration of nurses, proposed by the medical Members of Parliament.

The effect of them will be that everyone who has been nursing the sick for three years before November 31st, 1919, will be entitled to registration. The proposed rules take no account of training whatever. It is suggested that the Council should examine such nurses, but the examination would necessarily be of so narrow a scope that it would be wholly unsatisfactory to the examining body, and if it was of a searching character in the small area open to it would certainly be considered unfair by the candidates.

Medical men have co-operated heartily with nurses in raising the standard of nursing for the benefit both of the public and of nurses themselves. It seems to me a pity that medical men should now propose that all the efforts of the last twenty years should be of no account.

The Council has itself proposed that nurses in practice before 1900 should be admitted on evidence of competence, and it might be wise to extend that limit, but I cannot look upon the present proposal as other than retrograde. I may add that I should think it highly doubtful whether any trained nurses would have registered at all if these proposals had been made a part of the Act.

Since, however, I am expressing merely my own opinion, I should be glad if other medical men would state their views in your columns.—I am, &c.,

W. P. HERRINGHAM,
Chairman of the General Nursing
Council for England and Wales.

GRAVE INJUSTICE TO TRAINED NURSES.

Sir Wilmot Herringham need have no doubts concerning the attitude of trained nurses had the present most unjust proposal been incorporated in the Statutory Rules in 1921. The State Register would have simply fizzled out—no certificated nurse would have placed her name on it; and it is therefore all the more unjust to the twenty thousand trained and certificated nurses who have registered under the Rules approved by Parliament that the agitation of the Controllers, lay and medical, of the College of Nursing, Ltd., should incite the G.N.C. to effect a gross breach of contract with nurses who have come forward to support the State Register. The new Rule—which proposes that nurses in practice without hospital experience before 1900 shall be placed on the General Part of the Register—is bad enough, but that all the women who could and should have trained and who shirked doing so during the past 23 years, and who have, in private homes and otherwise, victimised the sick by their ignorance,

should now have preferential treatment, and share the privilege of legal status with nurses who have earned it, is grossly unfair.

Take the highly trained and certificated nurses who have been side-tracked on the Supplementary Sick Children's and Fever Registers. Many of these specialists are highly qualified, have had three or two years' systematic training, have passed examinations and received certificates, and still are not eligible to be placed on the General Part of the Register. Compare the position of these nurses with that of the totally untrained persons, the Parliamentary Medical Committee propose to make eligible for the General Part of the Register—women who may have never worked in a hospital for a day, who have received no systematic theoretical or practical teaching, who have never been examined, and who hold no evidence of real efficiency whatever. We repeat, the proposal is grossly unfair to every nurse who has conformed to the present Statutory Rules, both on the General and Supplementary Registers, and we believe that already women who have worked in special hospitals and are not qualified to be placed on the Supplementary Registers, are being recommended by the Registration Committee and will be foisted *in camera* by the Council on to the General Part of the Register. Is it any wonder that there are still at least 20,000 certificated nurses who are standing out? From one large hospital not a dozen nurses have registered, whilst from another some 300 only out of 1,500 certificated nurses have applied.

Instead of repeating vamped replies to questions in the House, we advise Mr. Neville Chamberlain, the new Minister of Health, to learn the truth outside his own Department.

PROBATIONERS DEPRIVED OF THE RIGHT TO A SYLLABUS OF TRAINING.

Mr. Chamberlain has supported Sir Wilmot Herringham in depriving probationers in training of their *right* to a compulsory Syllabus of Training, and by maintaining the present intolerable lack of educational standards, they are rendering the Nurses' Registration Act a dead letter so far as co-ordination and efficiency of teaching and training are concerned, and are, like dancing mice, revolving in a little cage in the old vicious circle, which has resulted in a terrible shortage of educated probationers, and a serious lack of nursing efficiency.

As we have said before, there is absolutely no reason to pander to the little inferior institutions, as the majority of the best Training Schools are not in opposition to the "prescribed scheme of training" provided in the Syllabus of Training. The whole attitude of the majority of the present Council is one of crass ignorance and invertebrate futility, and if the Chairman of its Education Committee—Miss Lloyd Still—had only stood firmly for our rights instead of weakly conceding them, there would have been no question of scrapping the Syllabus and compelling us to enter upon an agitation to compel the Council to conform to the law.

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