

## THE PARLIAMENTARY MEDICAL COMMITTEE.

### WIDENING THE POWER OF ACCESS TO THE STATE REGISTER.

Three Deputations from Nurses' Societies were received on Monday, May 14th, by the Parliamentary Medical Committee of the House of Commons, the Chairman, Dr. F. E. Fremantle, M.A., F.R.C.P., O.B.E., presiding, in reference to the proposal, published in the *British Medical Journal*, as emanating from the Committee, to admit applicants without any hospital training to the first State Register of Nurses.

The organisations represented were:—

1. *The Registered Nurses' Parliamentary Council.*—Councillor Beatrice Kent, President; Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, Hon. Secretary Central Committee for the State Registration of Nurses; Miss H. L. Pearse, President National Union of Trained Nurses; Miss M. Drakard, Matron Plaistow Fever Hospital, Chairman Fever Nurses' Section R.N.P.C.; and Miss M. Breay, Hon. Secretary R.N.P.C.

2. *The Royal British Nurses' Association.*—Sir A. J. Rice-Oxley, M.A., M.D., Herbert Paterson, Esq., C.B.E., F.R.C.S., M.C. Cantab., Miss A. Cattell, Miss Denham, and Miss Isabel Macdonald, Secretary.

3. *The Professional Union of Trained Nurses*, which also sent an expert deputation.

It will thus be seen that this disastrous proposal has aroused an immense amount of interest.

The proceedings were private, but we take this opportunity of stating that Sir Sydney Russell Wells, Hon. Secretary to the Parliamentary Medical Committee, announced that the statement in the *British Medical Journal*, which has aroused so much comment in nursing circles, was not the decision of the Parliamentary Medical Committee, nor was it issued under its authority. They desired to hear the opinions of all concerned before arriving at any decision.

The following Memorandum was submitted by the Registered Nurses' Parliamentary Council.

### REGISTERED NURSES' PARLIAMENTARY COUNCIL MEMORANDUM.

RE THE PROPOSAL TO ADMIT TO THE GENERAL PART OF THE REGISTER NURSES WHO HAVE HAD NO TRAINING IN GENERAL HOSPITALS OR INFIRMARIES, SUBMITTED TO THE PARLIAMENTARY MEDICAL COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, MAY 14TH, 1923.

The Nurses' Registration Act, 1919, requires the General Nursing Council for England and Wales to make Rules "enabling persons who, within a period of two years after the date on which the Rules to be made under the provisions of this paragraph (section 3 (2) (c)) first came into operation . . . to be admitted to the Register . . . under conditions which appear to the Council to be satisfactory for the purposes of this provision, and have adequate knowledge and experience of the nursing of the sick."

The first General Nursing Council gave much consideration to this question, and in the case of admission to the General Part of the Register framed Rules which have been approved by the Minister of Health, and by Parliament, requiring the following evidence of adequate knowledge and experience from every person who makes application as an existing nurse (Rule 9 (1)) :—

(a) *A Certificate* that the applicant has had not less than three years' training before the 1st November, 1919, in a General Hospital . . . or in a Poor Law Infirmary approved by the Council; or

(b) *Evidence* that the applicant has had not less than *one year's training* in a Hospital or Infirmary approved by the Council as aforesaid, together with evidence that she has subsequently been *bona fide* engaged in practice as a nurse in attendance on the sick for not less than two years before 1st November, 1919.

This was the minimum amount of training which the Council considered could be regarded as "satisfactory for the purposes of this provision" or as ensuring that the applicant had "adequate knowledge and experience of the nursing of the sick."

At its meeting on July 21st, 1922, the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, recognising that certain exceptional cases of hardship might arise, passed the following Rule, applying to all parts of the Register, which was not approved by the General Nursing Council for Scotland :—

#### Rule 9 (b),

"Notwithstanding anything in the preceding Rules, the Council shall have power to consider any application for Registration which shall be referred to it in detail by the Registration Committee as being of an exceptional character, and, if it thinks fit, to approve the applicant for registration."

We submit that this Rule, if approved, would permit of cases of exceptional hardship in relation to all Parts of the Register receiving consideration, without annulling Rule 9 (1) (b) requiring one year's training in a hospital or

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