

Royal British Nurses' Association.

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Royal Charter.

THIS SUPPLEMENT BEING THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE CORPORATION.

THE POLICY OF THE R.B.N.A. AS REGARDS THE SYLLABUS OF TRAINING.

We have heard many comments lately on the decision that the Syllabus of Training in General Nursing is neither to be signed by the Minister of Health nor to be laid before the Houses of Parliament. In simple language this decision means that the Syllabus is to be merely advisory and that whether it be followed or not is to depend upon the whim of this or that hospital, that it is in fact a chattel which those responsible for the education of the nurses may regard or disregard according to their inclination or convenience. Yet this Syllabus, which we are now told is to be so lightly regarded, emanated from the body entrusted by Parliament to carry out the provisions of the Act and to see that the prescribed training "shall be carried out." It is, indeed, difficult to understand why the Education Committee devoted so much earnest thought and labour, so much precious time and so many consultations to the Syllabus if they were not prepared to push it to its ultimate limits of usefulness to the sick and to the nurses. It seems inconceivable that they should not be fully desirous, anxious indeed, to place this important piece of work on the sound foundation of Ministerial approval and Parliamentary recognition and upon it to build up a great superstructure of nursing education. Surely, if there is one thing to which a woman is entitled when commencing her career, it is definite and irrefutable information as to what her professional education should comprise.

The decision to make the Syllabus advisory and not obligatory will but perpetuate the difficulties with which many aspirants to professional efficiency have been met in the past when those, in authority, in certain wards, were so overburdened with work and responsibility that for a probationer to ask for any item of information on nursing was to court, if not insult, at least rebuff, to arouse in her superior officer a feeling that she aimed at becoming a sort of "high brow" rather than training herself in qualities of sacrifice and self-effacement. All too often such prejudices arose from a lack of ability to understand the impelling force of the desire for knowledge inherent, in greater or less degree, in all of us.

In retrospective mood we see history repeating itself again in the attitude adopted by nursing educationalists towards the Syllabus. In other days, ere life had opened its vistas before us, we thought in terms of the microcosm, the individual, and thirsted for the wide knowledge that would make us efficient for the performance of our own little part in the stage of life. And it is through the individual first that one must learn to think in terms of the macrocosm, of the race, the community, the profession which one represents. It is for the sake of progress and evolution in the nursing profession that we demand that there shall be a prescribed scheme for the training of nurses who are to become eligible for admission to the State Register. Without such a scheme the quality of the Register and of the Profession generally must be seriously and prejudicially affected. We base our claim to such a scheme not merely upon the letter of the law as we find it in the Nurses' Registration Act, not merely upon the contention that the law makers are not to be permitted to become the law breakers of our profession, but because a legalised standard of education gives that moral force, that hall mark of a due education and intellect that can place nursing unmistakably among the great professions and cause it to become one of the most beneficent and useful of any.

In all movements that make for progress there is a strong impulse towards a greater expansion and growth and, side by side with this, there is invariably a negative aspect as well. This negative aspect is necessary often to give balance, but if it becomes too strong there must lie in the movement a weakness which is more dangerous than opposition from outside. The weakness and lack of enterprise which have been shown in connection with the Syllabus, and the consequent loss of the statutory force to which it is clearly entitled, are bound to retard the progress of nursing education and to affect adversely the nurses themselves. Hence it is that the organised societies of independent nurses feel in honour bound to contend for the prescribed training provided for in the Act, and we are determined to press to the uttermost the nurses' rights in this connection. We look to our Members to give us their support in every direction they can. It is a matter which closely affects themselves. Public

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