

vision, and have adequate knowledge and experience of the nursing of the sick.

That is an important qualification. That qualification does not appear to be covered by paragraph (c) of the hon. Member's Motion. He would say: "What can you have better than a certificate signed by two medical men?" I do not pronounce any opinion upon the value of a certificate of this kind given by two medical men.

But I am bound to take notice of the fact that many of these nurses do not consider that the certificate of a medical man is the best certificate of the competence of a nurse. They think that a medical man, particularly a surgeon, considers that the best nurse is the nurse who hands him the right thing at the right moment. But that is not the sole or even the most important qualification of a nurse, and while I do not express any opinion on the point, I do say that a certificate by two medical men is not sufficiently satisfactory to a large body of these nurses. The result of a Motion of this kind would be to impose on the nurses already on the register and on the General Nursing Council a large number whom they do not consider as being of the right stamp. What effect that would have I do not profess to know, but I anticipate that it would give rise to grave discontent, and it might have an effect on the carrying out of the Act passed in 1919. I think that this goes altogether too far, but the House will realise from what I said a little while ago that I do realise that this is a genuine grievance on the part of many women who have been engaged in nursing but who have not had the training to enable them to comply with the regulations that have been laid down under the Act. Therefore I shall not be sorry to see some relaxation, and it seems to me that the proposal made by my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for St. Albans in the next Amendment would be a fair compromise which would cover most of the hard cases which were referred to by the hon. Member for Bermondsey.

DR. SALTER: Not one of the cases I referred to would be covered by that Amendment. Every nurse in the nursing home to which I referred has been engaged for less than 13 years. One has been engaged 12 years, another 11, and another 10, but every one of them would be excluded by the Amendment of the hon. and gallant Member for St. Albans.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN: I am sorry to hear that. I have no doubt that there would still be a certain number of hard cases, but we have got to face the facts of the situation. We have got a strong feeling on the part of a large body of nurses already on the register, and I have come to the conclusion that the Amendment of the hon. and gallant Member for St. Albans is about as far as we could go with any hope of getting any practical result. Therefore I am going to ask the House to reject this Motion and to accept the next one on the Paper.

MR. PRINGLE: The question is whether the Regulations, even with the Amendment which the right hon. Gentleman proposes to accept, comply with

the provisions of the Statute. It seems to me that under the Regulations, even as amended, a qualification which was not contemplated by the Legislature when it passed the Statute is imported. Let me read Sub-section (2) of Clause 3 of the Nurses' Registration Act. It says:

"Rules under this Section shall contain provisions—

- (c) 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 first come into operation, make an application in that behalf (in this Act referred to as 'the existing nurses' application') to be admitted to the Register on producing evidence to the satisfaction of the Council—"

The nature of the evidence is laid down in very specific terms.

—"that they are of good character, are of the prescribed age, are persons who were, for at least three years before the first day of November, 1919"—

exactly the terms which my hon. Friend lays down—

—"bona fide engaged in practice as nurses in attendance on the sick 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."

There you have the conditions laid down, and, as I understand, a condition has been laid down by the Council, in regard to this provision, in which it is stated that a year's training in hospital is required. I contend that the paragraph which I have read to the House neither contains nor contemplates any such qualification. The qualification might, therefore, be held to be *ultra vires*.

MAJOR BARNETT: I wish to oppose the Motion. The hon. Member who moved the Prayer had not the advantage of being in the last Parliament, which passed this legislation, and I am afraid that he has not appreciated the fact that the Act, and the Rules made under it, can be read. Rule 9 says:

"The following evidence of adequate knowledge and experience shall be required from every person who makes application as an existing nurse."

What is the first thing that the hon. Member puts down as evidence of adequate knowledge and experience? The first thing is a certificate of good character. There is a whole rule, Rule 8, which does nothing but provide for the good character of people who want to go on the Register. I think that the hon. Member has not read Rule 8. You may have a character good enough for an Archbishop or for a member of the Independent Liberal party and yet not be a person fit to look after the sick. His second point is that the certificate of a registered nurse and two medical men shall be sufficient evidence as to the capability of the nurse. The hon. Gentleman puts forward an extraordinary proposition. He says the Act lays down that there shall be no training for existing nurses. As one who was concerned in the initiation of this legislation, I should like to see the part of the Act where that is laid down.

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