

## COLLEGE ELECTION TACTICS.

Miss F. A. Sheldon, Registrar of the College of Nursing, Ltd., addressed the following untrue and misleading letter to *Time and Tide* last week:—

### THE NURSES' REGISTRATION ACT AND THE "EXISTING NURSE."

SIR,—All honour to those women who as Nursing or General Service V.A.D.s served their country with such splendid devotion and distinction.

It is however most cruelly mischievous and entirely irrelevant to introduce their names into the question now at issue.

No responsible person or society is suggesting that V.A.D.s can be described under the Act as "Existing Nurses" and eligible for admission to the General Part of the State Register.

The Act prescribes that existing nurses are persons who were for at least three years before November 1st, 1919, engaged in practice as nurses in attendance on the sick under conditions which appear to the Council to be satisfactory and have adequate knowledge and experience of the nursing of the sick.

The Register closes to the Existing Nurse, July, 1923, and at present to qualify for registration the General Nursing Council requires her to hold a certificate of at least one year's training in an approved hospital or infirmary (a Cottage Hospital with less than twenty beds has been so approved) followed by two years' nursing work.

The fact of not actually holding this certificate disqualifies hundreds of *bona fide* nurses. Many had training where certificates were not given and all had practical clinical instruction and from twenty to thirty years' working experience. They nursed acute surgical and accident cases under difficult conditions, typhoid and other epidemics, and carried on their routine chronic work for incredibly long hours and small pay.

The value of these women to the nation in country districts or town slums cannot be over-estimated, and certainly cannot be measured in the terms of a one year's certificate.

Many of their fellow nurses who have had the privilege of definite training or who hold a recognised professional position feel that it is a grave injustice to exclude these nurses, and that each applicant should be judged upon her individual merits and this is certainly the spirit of the Act. If the nurse produces evidence that she has the required "knowledge" and "experience" the public will be protected, and the Register will truly represent the Nursing Service of the State.

W. I.

Believe me, &c.,  
F. A. SHELDON.

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick has sent the following criticism of Miss Sheldon's "mischievous and irrelevant" statements to *Time and Tide*:—

To the Editor of *Time and Tide*.

SIR,—It is to be regretted that your correspondent, Miss F. A. Sheldon (the Registrar of the College of Nursing, Ltd.) makes unjustifiable and injurious statements in your issue of January 12th, which can at once be disproved by reference to the Nurses' Registration Act, 1919, and to the Statutory Rules framed under its authority. That a lady holding the responsible position which Miss Sheldon does should be so ignorant of the provisions of the Act, and Statutory Rules, and thus mislead your readers, is much to be regretted.

The statements to which I refer, and the facts, are as follows:—

### The State Register of Nurses.

#### STATEMENT I.

"No responsible person or society is suggesting that V.A.D.s can be described under the Act as 'Existing Nurses,' and eligible for admission to the General Part of the State Register."

#### THE FACT.

At the meeting of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales held on September 23rd, 1920, the Chairman of the Council read the following letter:—

Central Joint V.A.D. Committee,  
20, Berkeley Street,  
London, W.1.

August 26th, 1920.

DEAR MADAM,—I am requested by the Chairman of the Joint Women's V.A.D. Committee\* to ask you whether you would kindly send me a ruling as to whether V.A.D. members who have served for three years in military hospitals during the war, will be eligible for enrolment on the Nursing Register of England, and if so what the conditions would be.

Yours faithfully,  
S. WILSON, Secretary.

The ruling was in the negative.

Thus, if the introduction of the names of V.A.D.s into the question of State Registration is "most cruelly mischievous and entirely irrelevant," Miss Sheldon must blame her chairman, Sir Arthur Stanley, for this misdeemeanour.

The College of Nursing, Ltd., is now agitating for a new Rule to place persons on the General Part of the Register who "have worked in a hospital or institution not recognised by the Council" (as provided by the Statutory Rules) and who, therefore, may have received no training or experience in general nursing whatever.

#### STATEMENT II.

"The Register closes to the Existing Nurse, July, 1923, and at present to qualify for registration the General Nursing Council requires her to hold a certificate of at least one year's training in an approved hospital or infirmary, followed by two years' nursing work."

#### THE FACT.

This is an entirely untrue statement. The General Nursing Council does not require that a nurse who has been trained for one year shall hold a certificate. The Statutory Rule for the admission of Existing Nurses, with a minimum of one year's training, to the General Part of the Register requires:—

"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."

It will be seen, therefore, that the statement that a certificate is required is entirely without foundation.

The First General Nursing Council, of which I was a member, in framing this Rule, was unanimous that the minimum of one year's training in a General Hospital or Infirmary was the very least experience that a woman should possess who was to be guaranteed

\*The Hon. Sir Arthur Stanley (Chairman also of the College of Nursing, Ltd.).

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