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EDITORIAL.

THE NURSES' REGISTRATION ACT, 1919.

Three matters of primary importance were reported at the meeting of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales on July 25th:—

(1) The declaration of the results of the first examinations held under the authority of the State, an announcement which was received by the Council without an apparent ripple of interest or pleasure.

(2) That the Register of Nurses, due to be published as soon as possible after January 1st of each year, is now in print (July 25th).

(3) The final arrangements were made for placing on the market the protected State uniform; and how necessary such a uniform is to Registered Nurses may be appraised by the letter from the Chief Constables' Association to the General Nursing Council, which we print on page 188.

Therefore, though the present Council, which includes many persons who opposed the principle of Registration until it was inevitable, cannot perhaps be expected to be enthusiastic when the provisions of the Act become operative, it is evident that even when its benefits are weakened by the action of inimical persons they are real and substantial.

EXPERIENCE AND PATIENT OBSERVATION.

The proceedings of the British Medical Association at its Ninety-second Annual Meeting at Bradford covered a wide range of topics, and had lessons of interest to nurses.

In his Presidential Address, Dr. J. Basil Hall, Hon. Consulting Surgeon of the Bradford Royal Infirmary, dealing with the past, present, and future of medicine, said that "he did not think their recent military experiences had done much to advance their usefulness in dealing with sickness in civil life. The whole war period brought into focus an exaggerated idea of the importance of surgical technique and cramped development of surgical judgment. The treatment of every injury and every disease became standardised. It was a bad training for the newly qualified student of medicine. Each became a mere cogwheel in a great machine, designed to fulfil a special purpose. During the most impressionable period of their career they worked amongst all the sensational excitement associated with military service, and civil practice was now an irksome task for them. Hence was largely derived the widespread desire to practise some form of specialism, which had become an idol which all and sundry worshipped. To the layman the term 'specialist' had become a

cabalistic word, which he repeated on every possible occasion. There was, however, one specialism which he frequently failed to appreciate at its proper value—the specialism of general practice. It required more knowledge of human nature and more experience over a wide field of observation to make a really first-class general practitioner than the public had any cognizance of."

Nurses have had a like experience, and now the ordinary routine of their daily work is in many instances unsatisfying and irksome.

Dr. Hall counselled the younger generation to "think more, and observe more, for themselves, as their forefathers did, and not be so ready to bow the knee to a fanatical worship of so-called scientific methods of investigation and treatment. Experience begotten by patient observation would teach them the real value of scientific methods, and their limitations. They must each play their part by developing their personal observation and experience, and not be content to invoke specialisms to solve those problems which they ought to decide for themselves."

To think, and to observe, for oneself is the basis of good nursing as well as of medical practice, and the present generation of nurses will do well to lay Dr. Hall's advice to heart. Some of us are old enough to remember members of the older generation of nurses who in their day had little teaching, and yet because of their devotion to the sick, their individuality, and their shrewd observation, taught us many priceless lessons.

To make the patient comfortable, to keep him in a state of mental content because of the kindness which encompassed him, was no small contribution towards putting him in the best possible condition for benefitting by the treatment and care which he received.

Those were the days when nurses asked to be allowed to stay on duty if a ward was extra heavy, or some patient needed special attention difficult to arrange for, with a nursing staff insufficient to allow of nurses being detailed for special duty except in very exceptional cases.

No doubt the conditions were hard, and many nurses broke down under the strain, but they did produce a very high type of well-informed, devoted women who had learnt in the school of experience. They would be the first to realise their limitations, to value the teaching now so easily accessible, but with pain and difficulty they blazed a trail in which the younger generation could follow and find space and freedom. Well for them if while stretching out to grasp new opportunities they remember the wisdom gained so painfully, and put at their disposal so generously, by those gone before.

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