

It is requisite that a *compulsory* Syllabus of Training shall be incorporated in the Rules framed by the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, and this must be approved, and signed by the Minister of Health, and submitted to Parliament in due course, and we earnestly petition, Sir, that you will sign the Syllabus of Training, twice approved by the first General Nursing Council, and thus give to probationers in training the security of an efficient education in nursing, to which they are entitled under the Act.

It is noteworthy that at a meeting of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, held on September 21st, 1923, when a protest was made by Miss A. M. Bushby, Direct Representative of the nurses on the Supplementary part of the Register for Sick Children's Nurses, against the substitution of a Syllabus of Examination for a Prescribed Syllabus of Training, that the Chairman of the Council placed the responsibility on the Ministry of Health, and said that the Council had had to yield to *force majeure*.

I beg further to point out that a Prescribed Syllabus of Training is in force in Scotland, and that, owing to the reciprocal arrangement between England and Scotland, the General Nursing Council for Scotland will be compelled to place on its Register women registered in England who have not been trained on a "Prescribed Scheme" unless they contest the validity of the action of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales in evading the provisions of the Act.

The question of the Prescribed Syllabus of Training has been most unfortunately handled, and I beg to hand in a Summary detailing the way in which it has been dealt with.

The question of a Prescribed Syllabus of Training and systematic instruction is the principle underlying the whole of the Nurses' Registration Act, and was kept in the forefront throughout the thirty years in which trained nurses were working for the organisation of their profession. A State Register did not mean to them a mere list of names, but a guarantee that the names of those admitted to the State Register had been entered there only after they had passed through a sufficient scheme of teaching and training. Only those who have been placed in responsible charge of patients acutely ill, in private houses and elsewhere, with insufficient preparation, realise the keen anxiety and mental strain suffered by conscientious women, and the unnecessary suffering, and loss of life, which may result from inadequate nursing.

Nevertheless it was this demand upon the part of trained nurses for a prescribed system of training, followed by a one-portal examination before State Registration, which united the managers of a number of voluntary hospitals, in opposition to the Registration of Nurses, and to what they termed "State Interference."

I desire to emphasise that the Managers of Voluntary Hospitals are employers who have absolute control over their nursing employees, and are responsible to no Government Department for their hours of work, their conditions of service, or their adequate housing and feeding, all of which have in the past been notoriously bad.

It is in your power, Sir, and we claim it is an obligation under the Nurses' Registration Act, to give to probationers a Prescribed Training in approved hospitals.

The First General Nursing Council on two occasions sent forward the Syllabus of Training for the Minister's approval and signature, the first time on the express instructions of Sir Alfred Mond. Later the Minister receded from this position, and suggested that it would be sufficient if a Rule were made providing that the nurse had received instruction in all the subjects of the Syllabus of Examination, which would be scheduled to the Rules.

We believe this decision to be *ultra vires*, as well as unjust in its practical application, and we earnestly appeal to you to see justice done in this particular.

For the information of the Minister Mrs. Fenwick handed in the following Statement, the concluding paragraphs of which she read:—

THE GENERAL NURSING COUNCIL FOR ENGLAND AND WALES.

SUMMARY OF DEMAND FOR THE SYLLABUS OF TRAINING.

1920-1921. Education Committee sat weekly and drafted the Syllabus of Training, and Nursing Schools were informed that it was available.

At first it was not realised that the "prescribed" Syllabus of Training came under the Rules and required the consent of the Minister of Health; but in 1921 the Minister intimated to the Council that this was so, and that the Rules must be approved and signed by him, and be submitted to Parliament in due course. The Council conformed to this instruction, and sent forward the Syllabus of Training for signature.

In October, 1921, Mr. L. G. Brock wrote from the Minister: "As regards the Syllabus of Training adopted by the Council, the Minister (Sir Alfred Mond) notes that this will be incorporated in the Rules which will be submitted in due course for his sanction."

In November, 1921, Mr. Brock wrote: "With regard to the Syllabus of Training and the Draft Rule relating to it, which was also enclosed in your letter under 'Reply,' I am to state that the Syllabus is now under consideration; but in view of the difficulty of appreciating its precise effect, apart from the other rules governing the admission of future nurses, and, in particular, the Rules relating to examinations, and any Rules which may be made for the affiliation of the smaller hospitals to larger centres for purposes of training, the Minister proposes to defer giving any definite decision until the whole body of the Rules are before him."

Thus the Rule *re* prescribed training was held up for a whole year, presumably by influential opposition from employers of probationary nurses through the Minister of Health.

This was apparent in the Education Committee, which began to wobble on the demand for a Syllabus of "prescribed" training.

In September, 1922, the Committee recommended to the Council "that it is thought sufficient for the present to issue this Syllabus of Subjects for Examination with the Nurses' Chart attached as a guide to training," and the Council laid down the regulation "that a Nurse presenting herself for Examination may be questioned on any of the subjects contained in this Syllabus."

Thus a nurse was to be examined on subjects without being taught on a "prescribed" syllabus.

A letter received from the Ministry on this important matter was reported, and withheld from the Council. Mrs. Bedford Fenwick asked for a copy. On October 6th, 1922, the new Chairman of the Council, Sir Wilmot Herringham, informed a Deputation from the Association of Poor Law Unions (which had asked the Minister *not* to sanction the Syllabus of Training) that the Syllabus "was nothing but a model for the help of the Training Schools. No nurse would be asked whether she had been trained on the Syllabus or not. It was a mere model."

This egregiously ignorant statement was made by Sir Wilmot Herringham without consulting the Council. Presumably he had never read the Nurses' Registration Act, which in Section 3 (2) (a) and (b) provides for a compulsory scheme of training.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)