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EDITED BY MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK, REGISTERED NURSE.

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EDITORIAL.

PROBATIONERS RIGHT TO A PRESCRIBED TRAINING.

"Nothing is ever settled until it is settled right," and the question of the "Prescribed Training" in an institution approved by the General Nursing Council in that behalf, promised in the Nurses' Registration Act, 1919, is still the subject of controversy, because of the invertebrate attitude of the Council, which makes no effort for the enforcement of the Act in this particular.

The matter has, however, been advanced a step further by the acknowledgment by officials of the Ministry of Health of the principle of the right of Probationers to a prescribed training. As will be seen in our Report of the proceedings of the last meeting of the General Nursing Council it was stated in a letter from the Ministry, forwarded to the Education Committee by the Solicitor, that in looking over the Draft Rules, as they now stand, it has occurred to officials of the Ministry to be "a little doubtful whether 'training' is sufficiently defined in these Rules to satisfy the requirements of Section 3 (2) (a) of the Act, which refers to 'prescribed training.'" It is further suggested that at the end of Rule 5 a short definition clause should be added in the following terms:—

"For the purposes of this Rule 'training in a Training School' means training given at the school in the subjects prescribed by the Council as subjects for the examination which the applicant is required to pass."

While this is still begging the question, it is a definite and welcome acknowledgment on the part of the Ministry that the Act provides for "a prescribed scheme of training" for nurses, and that the Council has been instructed to put on record a Rule making such provision.

This therefore gives the Council an opportunity of doing its duty and of presenting to the Minister the Syllabus of Training, which it has already drawn up and approved, so that he may approve and sign it. We hope Miss Lloyd Still, Chairman of the Education Committee, will do her duty to our profession in this particular, and no longer sit on the hedge.

There is no doubt that under present conditions, nurses who go up for their State Examination and fail to pass it, have a distinct grievance that the Syllabus of Training on which they will be educated has not been available before they entered a Training School.

The General Nursing Council for Scotland has proceeded on reasonable lines, and any continued evasion

of the Act by the English Council inevitably entails a sense of injustice and injury on the part of pupil nurses.

THE CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY OF ACCUSED PERSONS.

We rejoice to learn that Lord Darling, a great lawyer and former High Court Judge, is standing sponsor for a short and humane Bill to amend the law relating to the criminal responsibility of accused persons, which provides—

1. That a person is not responsible to the law for an act or omission charged against him as a crime if, at the time of doing the act or of making the omission, he is proved to be suffering from such a state of mental disease as deprives him—

(a) of capacity, at the time, to know, understand, and appreciate the physical nature and quality of the act done or omission made; or

(b) of capacity to know, understand, and appreciate at the time that the act done or omission made was wrong; or

(c) if, at the time the act was done or omission made, he was suffering from such a state of mental disease as therefrom to be wholly incapable of resisting an impulse to do the act or make the omission.

Further, Lord Darling's Bill provides that for the present illogical verdict of "Guilty, but insane," the jury shall return a special verdict to the effect "that the accused is not guilty because he was insane as aforesaid at the time when he did the act or did the omission."

Those of us who have attended Courts of Law and seen the victims of insidious brain disease, or puerperal mania, suffering the agony of a public trial on the capital charge of murder, and listened to the mockery of a death sentence, which must later be remitted—can but wonder that the cruelty of the law as it stands has not long ago been recognised and amended.

Lord Darling's Bill will, we feel sure, receive a very appreciative welcome from members of our profession, and we hope they will unite to give it all the support in their power.

The higher standards of medical treatment and nursing, mainly preventive in their nature, must include the study of the psychology of a patient in addition to his apparent physical symptoms, if the physician and the nurse are to unite in giving that service of the soul to humanity which provides balm for the tortured spirit. Together with this knowledge they will in the future help to secure exemption of criminal responsibility of accused persons who are insane, and the objects of their deepest commiseration.

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