

examinations, and it had taken them just about all their time; it had been very, very hard work, but they were now discussing plans for regular inspections of the hospitals. They did not think it enough to go simply by the results of the examinations, that of course would be some guide to the Council, but it had always been said by many of them (they had not yet produced the scheme but it was under discussion) that the members of the Council should periodically inspect the approved schools.

#### MENTIAL WORK.

Asked by the Chairman whether from his experience he thought there was evidence that the nurses who were undergoing training had their strength overtaxed by work that ought properly to be given to domestic servants, Sir Wilmot replied that the Chairman was recalling a very old thing. In 1877 the regulation was made at St. Bartholomew's Hospital that the nurses should not be employed on menial work, and a special class of ward maids were introduced in that year. That had been observed ever since at St. Bartholomew's, and he thought it was the general rule. He could not answer for every hospital, but in every respectable hospital it was so, he was sure.

Sir Wilmot defended the Advisory Syllabus of Training, saying that to stereotype a method which could then only be altered by Parliament would hinder rather than promote advance.

Asked by Colonel Sinclair what was the chief reason for not making the Syllabus of Training compulsory at present and obligatory on all training schools, he said he thought the right reason was the one that actuated himself, and that the wrong reason was the one which actuated the Minister, namely, that the opposition was too strong.

Questioned by Sir Richard Barnett, the witness said that he adhered to the sentence in his précis, "It is advisable that six Matrons should be included in the General Nursing Council." He thought a nucleus of that size was wanted. There were five places open for general nurses. Six out of the eleven should be Matrons. On Sir Richard Barnett asking if he were protecting the nurses against themselves, he replied that he was protecting the public. He thought it was very properly limiting the choice of the nurses to Matrons.

Questioned further by Sir Richard Barnett as to the words of the Statute under sub-section (3) requiring as a condition of the admission of any person to the Register that that person shall have undergone the prescribed training, whether his submission was that there was sufficient compliance with that, that they should have undergone an examination in certain prescribed subjects, Sir Wilmot said that was not the whole of the description. The description was that they should have three years' training in an approved institution, and should have been taught certain specified subjects.

*Sir Richard Barnett*: I am putting it to you that the Statute says the person shall (not may) have undergone the prescribed training?

*Witness*: I am putting it to you that that is satisfied by that rule.

*Sir Richard Barnett*: You prescribe certain subjects?

*Witness*: I beg your pardon. I must repeat again that we prescribe a certain definite term of training first of all varied according to circumstances. Secondly we prescribe and we have a certificate to sign to the effect that the person has been taught those subjects.

*Sir Richard Barnett*: In other words, you rely upon the certificate from the training schools which taught the subjects?

*Witness*: Yes.

After further questions from members of the Committee, the witness withdrew.

[To be continued.]

#### COMMENTS.

Mr. Brock informed the Select Committee that the language of the Sub-section of the Nurses Registration Act in regard to "prescribed training" was intentionally vague. We beg to differ. There is no vagueness about the word "shall," and the Act provides that the Council shall make rules requiring as a condition of the admission of any person to the Register that that person shall have undergone the prescribed training.

The argument that a compulsory syllabus of training, would result in "a cast iron code," "and stereotype training," and "make any adjustments and modifications very difficult," is one which has always been advanced against the State organisation of Nursing Education by its opponents, in their objection to State control.

Major Sir Richard Barnett went to the root of the matter when he called for the opinion of the Law Officers of the Crown and the case stated.

Registered Nurses and the public have a right to this opinion, and, with Sir Richard Barnett, we call for the opinion of the Law Officers on this disputed point. It was the duty of the Ministry of Health to have procured it before expressing an opinion.

We wonder where Sir Wilmot Herringham got the information in regard to the Syllabus of Training that "when compulsion was proposed such opposition was raised that the Minister refused to sign it."

The truth is that the opposition of the Training Schools was negligible. The Association of Poor Law Unions at first objected, but we have reason to believe that they have since changed their views, and the authorities of the Voluntary Hospitals came forward in a very generous way in support of the Council's policy.

A few anti-registration potentates may have gone over the heads of the General Nursing Council to the Ministry of Health, but, while we were on the Council, and the subject was a very live one, we do not remember that one voluntary hospital raised a protest against a compulsory Syllabus, nor did one do so at a Public Conference convened by the General Nursing Council to consider it in 1921. The blame that the Syllabus has so far not been made compulsory must be attributed first to the general weakness and futility of the General Nursing Council which has yielded to *Force Majeure* on the part of the Ministry of Health, and thus failed in its duty to protect the public by the enforcement of a standardised training, and has denied to nurses their right in this connection under the Act.

Secondly it must, in part, be attributed to the bureaucratic Secretariat of the Ministry of Health, in maintaining the policy of the one-time Minister, Sir Alfred Mond, whose contempt for nurses was proverbial, and who threatened in the House of Commons to move the repeal of their Act if he could not enforce his will.

Sir Wilmot Herringham's remarks to the Select Committee on the subject of menial work, when he stated that in 1877 the regulation was made at St. Bartholomew's Hospital that nurses should not be employed on menial work, and that had been observed ever since, and was, he was sure, the rule in every "respectable" hospital, has occasioned much mirth in nursing circles. We think if he observed a day's work done by nurses, even at the present time, he would have occasion to alter his opinion.

Nevertheless, as one of the older generation of nurses, we have never considered any service to the sick, however strenuous, of a menial nature.

Lastly we note that Sir Wilmot Herringham, as the spokesman of the General Nursing Council, as a whole, strongly advocated the reservation of seats for Matrons on the Council, and an Advisory Syllabus of Training, but did not mention that a strong minority of the Council hold diametrically opposite views, which he had promised to put forward.

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