

infectious diseases. On June 28th, 1927, the Minister promulgated his decision, which after approving the decision of the Council directed that "the Council shall give to the said Hospital approval as a complete training school for Fever Nurses in the case of all probationers who are now serving in it or who may enter it before the first day of July, 1934, subject to the following conditions:—

(1) A probationer training in the said Hospital shall not be qualified to sit for the Final Examination till she has completed a three years' course of training.

(2) The approval shall have effect so long only as the number of the staff other than probationers does not fall below the number so employed on the 15th day of March, 1927."

The Education and Examination Committee desires to draw the attention of the Council to what it believes to be the most dangerous precedent which is set up by this decision. The General Nursing Council was established by Act of Parliament, and is composed of sixteen registered nurses elected by registered nurses, and of nine other persons, two of whom are appointed by the Privy Council, two by the Board of Education, and five by the Minister of Health. These persons are all of them, presumably, persons who are expert in Educational matters, and the majority of them are well versed in the training of nurses. The duty of the Council is to form and keep a Register of Nurses, which consists of several parts, and the Council is bound by the Act to make rules for regulating the conditions of admission to the Register. It is clear from Section 6, Sub-section (2) (c) of the Act that one of the conditions is that candidates for admission to the Register shall have conformed to a standard of training laid down by the Council. The standard comprises, amongst other requirements, the length of the period of training to be undergone by the candidate. In the case of candidates for admission to the Supplementary Part of the Register for Fever Nurses, the length is two years in a complete training school for fever nurses for any unregistered nurse, or one year in the case of a nurse who is already registered on the General Part of the Register. The rules as regards the length of the period were approved by the Minister of Health and the Houses of Parliament. The training must be taken in a Fever Hospital approved by the Council as a complete training school. In its recognition of Hospitals as complete training schools the Council must take into consideration the size of the hospital and the amount and variety of clinical material which the hospital affords, and the Council has always taken as an index the size of the hospital, not the number of beds, but the average daily number of occupied beds. This average, in the case of Fever Hospitals, is taken over a period of five years immediately before the date of application for recognition as a training school. The Council has also sanctioned schemes by which hospitals which are too small, or which do not admit a sufficient variety of diseases to act as complete training schools, may affiliate with other hospitals for the purpose of training nurses. The Council has never stated what it considers to be the minimum number of occupied beds to obtain recognition as a complete training school, but in practice it has adopted 45 in the case of Voluntary and Poor Law Hospitals and 35 in the case of Fever Hospitals. It will be observed that in the case of the Hastings Fever Hospital the Minister has actually reduced this number to 15, and this number the Committee believe to be much too small to afford an adequate training even if the number were more equally divided amongst the different diseases than it is at present. Further, the Minister has prolonged the period of training in this hospital from two to three years. Possibly he thinks that by prolongation of the period of training he makes up for the deficiency in clinical material.

The Committee have stated above that in their opinion the Minister by his decision has created a dangerous precedent. The danger lies in the fact that apparently the Minister considers that he is justified, acting under Section 7, Sub-section (2) of the Act, in ignoring a standard of training that has been established by that very body which has been created for the purpose of establishing it (to which body it may be observed he himself appoints five members), and in setting up a standard of his own. The decision in the Hastings case affects only the training of fever nurses, but there is no guarantee whatsoever that, now this precedent has been made, a similar decision might not be given in the case of other hospitals, Voluntary or Poor Law. It must also be pointed out that, in his decision, while the Minister orders that the number of staff shall not fall below the number

engaged at the date of the hearing of the appeal, he makes no condition as to the number of patients. The number might fall to three or four, and yet the hospital would still remain a complete training school, at any rate till the year 1934. Doubtless the Minister has acted within the strict letter of the law, but the Committee cannot believe that Section 7, Sub-section (2) was formed with the intention of allowing the Minister fundamentally to alter the standards of training laid down by the Council.

The Committee, therefore, recommended the Council to adopt the following resolution, and this was unanimously agreed:—

"That the General Nursing Council desires to offer a strong protest against the decision of the Minister of Health in the case of the Hastings Borough Sanatorium, which in the Council's opinion not only permits a totally insufficient training in this particular hospital, but will by its effect prevent an adequate standard from being maintained. The Council instructs its representatives to solicit a further interview to enable it to state the facts to the Minister himself."

THE CHAIRMAN reminded the Council that at its July meeting, at which the decision of the Minister of Health was reported, the letters conveying this decision was referred back to the Education and Examination Committee for further consideration. As a result an interview took place between Mr. Brock, of the Ministry of Health, and the Chairman, Dr. Goodall and Miss Villiers, which these representatives of the Council felt to be unsatisfactory.

DR. GOODALL, discussing the recommendation submitted by the Education Committee, said he doubted whether a more important recommendation had been on the Agenda since the days when the Rules and Regulations of the Council were framed. It involved a question of principle, and a most important precedent. The letter of the Ministry was a very curious one. The decision affirmed the decision of the General Nursing Council, and, having done so, disagreed with the standards the Council had laid down, and directed the Council to approve the Sanatorium of the Borough of Hastings, subject to certain conditions. Then, no mention was made of the number of patients necessary, this apparently might sink to zero, providing that the number of the staff other than probationers did not fall below the number employed on March 15th, 1927. The Minister's ruling did not even say "nursing staff." The standard of the Council was altered in two ways by the Minister's ruling (1) the number of beds which it considered desirable for a complete training school for fever nurses was reduced from 35 to 15, and the period of training was raised to three years. The Minister had in fact gone back on the Rules approved by himself and by the House of Commons, and if this decision stood it would be the Minister himself who would set the standard of training, not the Council, the body which was set up by Parliament to do so. The Minister had no doubt acted on legal advice, and perhaps his decision was legal, but it was not within the spirit of the Act.

There was no doubt that, if acted upon, this decision would lower the standard of training in fever hospitals, and it would go further than that: the standard in other hospitals, especially Poor Law Hospitals which are under the jurisdiction of the Minister, might be lowered also, and we should go back to the old chaos which the Act was set up to reform.

It was absolutely necessary that the experience and practical work of nurses should be extensive and good. Also the decision might affect the question of reciprocity with the Colonies.

Dr. Goodall, in conclusion, appealed to Associations of Nurses to back up the Council, and said that the Fever Nurses Association had already taken action in this respect.

MISS VILLIERS very strongly supported Dr. Goodall's remarks.

MISS SPARSHOTT expressed the opinion that the extension of the training from two years to three in a hospital of 51

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