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EDITORIAL.

AN URGENT QUESTION.

The most urgent question likely to arise in the early future, in connection with the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, is that of the recognition of an outside Examination for Mental Nurses by the Royal Medico-Psychological Association and the compulsion of the General Nursing Council to admit Nurses who pass this Examination to the Supplementary Part of the State Register for Mental Nurses.

The invertebrate manner in which the late Council dealt with the Mental Nursing question will be found to have placed the new Council in a very difficult position in this connection. But Parliament has placed upon the General Nursing Council the duty of defining and examining Nurses desiring admission to the Supplementary part of the Register for Mental Nurses, and to abandon this duty, and these powers, upon the clamour of outside bodies would be a betrayal of trust, and a depreciation of the prestige of Mental Nurses as compared with that of other classes of Nurses under its control.

Any such betrayal would inevitably mean the degradation, in the Nursing World, of Nurses attendant on the mentally sick, and would be a very great disaster to the unfortunate patients in mental hospitals and elsewhere.

Presumably the elected representatives of Mental Nurses on the Council realise this and will be on the alert to prevent any such injustice. Moreover, the Council has the situation in its own hands. It has only to exercise its statutory powers. So important do we consider this question that we have given it the most prominent position possible in this issue.

PROFESSIONAL UNIFORM.

A neat and becoming uniform is an asset of considerable importance to trained Nurses, and it has been of much interest at Congresses convened by the International Council of Nurses, at which the Nurses of the world assemble, to note and compare the various uniforms worn by the members. It is with regret we are compelled to own that in this comparison the uniform of British Nurses is, for the most part, at a disadvantage, and this is the more to be deplored because the British Nationals are some of the few who have had the prestige of a State uniform conferred upon them.

But this uniform is undistinguished and ugly, made of material which quickly becomes dusty and therefore shabby.

The difficulty of obtaining and fitting the regulation hats, which the General Nursing Council for England and Wales do not permit the firms supplying the uniform coats to stock, while no bar is placed upon their supplying

the regulation storm cap, has naturally led to their pushing the cap. This may be suitable for cyclists, or in bad weather in country districts, but for ordinary wear is most unsuitable and unbecoming. Moreover, the cost of the State uniform, which so many Nurses cordially dislike, is very considerable, so that various Associations of Nurses which had looked forward with pleasurable anticipation to the day when the State uniform would be available for the use of their staffs are, we understand, considering reverting to a uniform of their own design, which shall be becoming, moderate in price, and professional in appearance.

The uniforms of the Nursing Services of the Crown—particularly of the latest, Princess Mary's Royal Air Force Nursing Service—are examples of uniforms of which their wearers may be proud. So are those of Queen's Nurses, and of the London County Council School Nurses, but the State uniform carries no such distinction, and worn, as it often is, with gloves, shoes and stockings, not according to regulations, is a travesty of what an ideal uniform for Nurses should be.

This raises another point, namely, that while the General Nursing Council and the Minister of Health prescribe by rule the details of the State uniform for Registered Nurses, the duty of calling to account a Nurse seen wearing the uniform in a manner which does not conform to the Rules is placed upon no one.

If a private in the Army is seen by an officer wearing his uniform in a way which diverges from regulations, he may be stopped, questioned and reported, and this no doubt is effective in producing circumspection.

It should surely not be beyond the wisdom of the sixteen elected Nurse Members of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales to devise some means whereby uniformity can be maintained, and to ensure that these shall be effectively put into force.

But the large majority of the Nurses who have obtained Permits to wear the State uniform (18,800 out of a total of 60,097 Nurses registered) have done so we believe in order that they may wear a protected uniform which shall be a sign to the public that they are qualified members of an honourable profession, that they take a pride in it, and desire to wear it with distinction. Many of such Nurses are deeply dissatisfied with that designed and approved by the General Nursing Council. We think they have grounds for their dissatisfaction, and we hope that the new Council will reconsider the whole question of the State uniform.

Pre-eminent among the Nurses of the world for the neatness of their uniform are those of the Scandinavian nations of Denmark, Norway and Sweden, as well as those of Finland and Belgium. Of those represented at the Conference at Geneva last year we give the palm to Belgium.

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