

Royal British Nurses' Association.

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THIS SUPPLEMENT BEING THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE CORPORATION.

THE PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION OF THE G.N.C.

Miss Isabel Macdonald, Secretary to the Corporation, has sent the following lucid letter to *The Daily Telegraph*, a valuable contribution to the correspondence in that paper on the proposed divided Preliminary Examination of the General Nursing Council.

November 18th, 1933.

The Editor, *The Daily Telegraph*,
135, Fleet Street, E.C.4.

SIR,—The correspondence which has appeared in *The Daily Telegraph* calls for indication of the fact that there is strong opposition on the part of large numbers of nurses to the proposals for the division of the Preliminary Examination of the General Nursing Council. They hold that the suggestion to hand over the teaching of anatomy, physiology and kindred subjects to the Head Mistresses of schools involves grave dangers to the educational powers, responsibilities and authority which at the present time belong to the governing body of the Nursing Profession (*i.e.*, the General Nursing Council) alone. To jeopardise the privileges involved in that authority and responsibility which now belong to the Council is to break faith with the past and with the future. The Registration Acts, with their one portal system of admission to the Register, were won by the nurses after a struggle extending over forty years, and those nurses who were convinced of the need of an Act for the State Registration of Trained Nurses (in order to protect the sick and to safeguard the nurses' qualifications) gave unstintingly from their then very small salaries, in order to finance the movement for reform. They hold that the nurses' representatives on the General Nursing Council should jealously guard all educational prerogatives and privileges won through such sacrifice and labour, rather than introduce an innovation that, whether many of us live to see its results or not, is bound to detract from the autonomy of the Council, its healthy functioning in the body politic and its real independence for the future.

Doubtless to hand over the teaching of the aforementioned subjects to others would relieve not only the educational programme of the nurse and, what may appear to some even more important, the educational programme of the nursing schools. But that is not the main issue; there are many great hospitals and their Matrons who would be extremely reluctant to deputise to any other profession than those of medicine and nursing, part of their present educational curriculum. Moreover, many teachers of nursing hold that it is impossible to teach applied physiology and anatomy outside the hospitals. In a school of art, for instance, a lecture on anatomy might be taught with the greatest precision and detail, but to listen later to one on the same subject, given by a medical man or a sister tutor in a hospital, would bring an appreciation of how even the smallest organs work in harmony with the whole and an appreciation, too, of how pathologically, disharmony arises.

To proceed to the administrative aspect of the proposals put forward by the Matron of Guy's Hospital, we should be glad to have two points made clear:—

(a) Is it proposed that when part of the teaching (which is now carried on in the nursing schools under supervisory powers of the Council) is handed over to another profession, that profession shall also participate in the examinations? It is hardly to be expected that the Head Mistresses will for long be content to allow their students to be examined by members of professions other than their own without sooner or later claiming the right to act as co-examiners as well as teachers.

(b) What qualifications will be required of those who are to teach Anatomy, Physiology, Hygiene, Biology, Chemistry and perhaps Bacteriology in the schools?

It is to be noted that Miss MacManus states definitely a hope that the Council will take no responsibility for these courses in the schools. Thereby she would place those schools in a privileged position, for even the great nursing schools, with their eminent medical and nurse lecturers, have to send up to the Council statements regarding the number of lectures given, attendances at those, conduct of nurses, etc. Apart from this point, however, examinations are no test unless behind them there lies a definite prescribed and approved system of teaching.

Lastly there is the economic question. At the present time the nurses turned out of the nursing schools are far in excess of the openings for their employment. For many, teaching proves a satisfying and fairly remunerative branch of the profession. Why should such a subject as the teaching of "Anatomy and Physiology for Nurses" (so the text books describe it) be handed over by the General Nursing Council to any but representatives of the medical and nursing professions? Most nurses experience anything but eagerness to subscribe to the proposals to surrender a large part of nursing education to a profession which, until this question arose, showed no interest in the history and evolution of nursing.

I am, Dear Sir,

Yours truly,

ISABEL MACDONALD,

Secretary to the Royal British Nurses' Association.

CHRISTMAS DINNER.

As usual, we remind our Members that any of them who care to dine with us on Christmas Day will be made very welcome. Dinner commences at 6.30 p.m., and the cost of this is half-a-crown to Members.

OBITUARY.

It is with regret that we have to report the death of Miss M. P. Thomson. About a year ago she took up an important appointment abroad, and she was there only a month when she fell a victim to some disease, due to a particularly virulent germ, and died in three days.

ISABEL MACDONALD,

Secretary to the Corporation.

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