

the words Roll and Register. They are pitched about like two tennis balls, and ever there is the covert suggestion, on a play of words, that these two words mean something quite dissimilar, but to the general public there is not such dissimilarity. Recently, in relation to this very point, we turned up a dictionary to find, as indeed one would expect, that one of the meanings supplied for the word Register is Roll, and conversely the meaning given to Roll is Register. In the light of these facts why place such emphasis on the innocence and inferiority of the word Roll when seeking to establish for the half-trained a place in the Sun? That the word Register, in so far as it now concerns the nursing profession, has a definite and important meaning is not to be denied. It has received the impress of the State in its connection with the Nurses Registration Act, and so will the word Roll be enhanced in meaning if the Recommendation of the Inter-Departmental Committee comes into operation. Then will arise confusion most confounded. The intervention of a local authority, whatever that may prove to be, will merely lead to a greater ambiguity for the man in the street and will, indeed, be a means of advertising the Roll as a cheap and reliable (?) means of securing cheap nurses. Such is the wilfulness to which words are made to lend themselves; and the duty of the nurses is to use the hand of the brain that constructs the concepts (*i.e.*, to exercise thinking) in order to get a true concept of this wilfulness and then fight to save their profession from destruction. That is what it amounts to, for there is no profession, in the sense of the WORD, that shares its legal status and high privileges and responsibility with the half-qualified. Such a condition would contradict absolutely the meaning of the word profession. It would become at best an empty courtesy title, used probably only by ourselves, a sham, when compared with its use in the recognised professions.

Here, again, we might refer to another irresponsible statement—that the public have no means now of discriminating between the fully qualified and the partially qualified. To add a contradictory but true concept to this manufactured "observation" we might draw attention to the volumes of the State Register of Nurses which appear annually, and a further concept, for one leads on to another, that the public would have been more widely educated to its existence if the General Nursing Council had yielded to the demand of certain organisations of nurses and let the lists of successful candidates for admission to the State Register appear with regularity in the Press after examinations. There could be no better opportunity for the public to make use of observation and the logical concept (*i.e.*, that the State itself has provided them with a means for discrimination when employing nurses for their sick) would have followed. These lists would have made the public familiar with the existence of the Register. To plead lack of knowledge, on the part of the public, in the present connection is condemnatory, to a very considerable extent, of the actions of those who refused a very reasonable request, to say the least.

At times we are tempted to see an almost Mephistophelian touch in the methods used to inveigle the nurses into the use of one hand of the brain only and in nothing more than in the reiterated use of the word "Control." No Government authority, no local authority, can control the public and say that people shall not employ whom they please to nurse their sick; and if persons wish to employ nurses (such as those who, it is suggested, shall be placed on a Roll under the Nurses Registration Act) to take charge of a case of pneumonia, or perhaps acute rheumatism, who is to say them nay? The jargon on the functions to be placed with "a local authority" is futile. That would mean advertisement and approval in the eyes of the public rather than control.

Much consideration and consultation has been given to the title which the State should confer on these half-qualified people. The Word (*i.e.*, the plain clear truth) must apparently not be used. That would be a most inconvenient course; hence consideration and a search for which crossword puzzles must have been good practice. Yet why not put forward the daring proposition to fall back, at long last, upon the Word and call these ladies what they are—"Half Qualified Nurses"? Certainly it would strengthen the argument against placing them under the Nurses Registration Act; but why not fetch truth from the bottom of the well, whatever the effect? But there has started instead another game with words to usurp the WORD—"Approved Invalid Attendant" as a sort of whitewash for the unqualified persons who, it is suggested, shall share the privileges of the Nurses Registration Act. The word "approved" has a forceful meaning for the ordinary member of the general public when it implies the approval of the State itself. When some of these ladies go out into private houses, the patients and their friends may have cause to feel that the General Nursing Council have had laid upon it a weight of responsibility, whether it realises this or not, while others, less concerned with the suffering of the aged, even perhaps regarding them as a burden, will find a good salve for their conscience in the word "approved." They will merely blame the State, never themselves, if suffering and helplessness are not mitigated to the extent they might be. It is the State, not they, which has given its *approval*, and the State cannot err to the unthinking.

These are just a few instances of how words can be deflected to serve irresponsibility, or it may be expediency, if a full measure of our conceptual faculties are not, willingly or otherwise, brought to meet observation. The tragedy is that we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that those who, to "find an easy way out," are ready to commit what the future at least will regard as a great injustice, can calculate to a very great extent indeed upon the fact that the great majority of the nurses are using only one of the two hands of the brain of which we write. They may observe, but they do not trouble to use thought to bring the concept to complete the percept: things even more dangerous than half-trained nurses come into being—half-truths.

We have wandered somewhat from the original ideal which inspired this article, but the instances quoted lie so very near at hand for its support at the moment. We have only to look around to see many similar instances of the debasement of the Word, either wilfully or carelessly, from its high destiny. In many newspapers to-day we see phrases cunningly strung together to catch the ear or the eye of the unthinking listener. Slogans, wisecracks, crooked offspring of minds, that are wordy and unconcerned with the Word. The precious gift of speech is in danger of becoming as mechanical as if it were controlled by the knob of a wireless set. Thus does destruction and not creation set in, and men become an easy prey to those who thus mechanically "sway the mass." Words that reach the observation but are not picked up with a clear conception can lead to noble or ignoble ends. Brutus and Mark Antony spoke to the same crowd. Between the words of these two Romans, ostensibly uttered from the same intention (*i.e.*, to praise the fallen Caesar), lies an abyss, and there is still that abyss to-day when we use words merely as words without attention to the WORD. So long as the brain does not in all honesty use the two hands of the brain, so long will the WORD become mere words, so long will it be debased from its original high purpose. Let us value it, fight for it, cherish and guard it as a jewel to ray forth truth when we polish it by the labour of thought.

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