

“CHAMPIONS.”

In our last issue we reported a call for “champions” to voice a fair deal for Registered Nurses, and we advised them to define just conditions for themselves, in support of the stability of the profession and of the Nurse Training Schools. We reminded them that they would render the sick and the community in general a service by so doing. Then we looked around to observe what groups of nurses were doing.

THE GENERAL NURSING COUNCIL FOR ENGLAND AND WALES.

We will take the General Nursing Council for England and Wales first, as it is the governing body of the Nursing Profession by Act of Parliament, and its pronouncements are, or should be, all powerful.

What do we gather from its proceedings during the past decade? Alas! certainly not championship by advancing professional standards, which should, year by year, elevate nursing into the skilled profession which the progress of medicine and the needs of the community demand.

Quite otherwise. Through the persistent manipulation of the representatives on the Council, of the Ministry of Health, supported by lay, medical and expedient nurse members, the safeguard of the one portal to the Register has crashed, and outside ignorant self-sufficiency now extensively controls our educational standards—one fatal result being that *in camera* the General Nursing Council has agreed to “cover” a grade of women known as “Assistant Nurses,” who, without efficient experience or test of knowledge or skill, are exploiting the sick public.

The irony of this betrayal is that it is proposed that we Registered Nurses are to pay for the competition of these women, by association with them under our own roof, in the headquarters provided by us for the conduct of our own business by the General Nursing Council. Could contempt for our professional status go further? We doubt it.

But this is only the beginning of the end. Already, having undermined its own authority, we find the new Minister of Health, no doubt with the best of intentions, careering ahead and establishing a Division of Nursing—a Register and what-not at the Ministry—whilst totally ignoring the “Statutory Body charged with the duty of maintaining the Register of Nurses for the sick and of controlling their education and examination.” We published the correspondence between the General Nursing Council and the Ministry of Health in our last issue. Alas! Nemesis has indeed taken time by the forelock in dispensing retributive justice! We call upon our colleagues on the General Nursing Council to champion our rights, or not further meddle therein.

THE ASSOCIATION OF HOSPITAL MATRONS.

We have before us the Report of the Spring General Meeting of the Association of Hospital Matrons, held on March 22nd last, in the Great Hall, of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, the President, Miss Helen Dey, O.B.E., R.R.C., in the chair. The deliberations and decisions of this privileged class of nurses are of vital interest to the great body of Registered Nurses, as they hold in their hands the trend of professional promotion for the rank and file. Let us note now how the Association is prepared to deal with the rights and privileges of Registered Nurses who for 20 years have enjoyed professional security under the Nurses' Registration Acts of 1919.

The Assistant Nurse.

To quote the Secretary's report (Miss R. Cox-Davies):
“Regarding the Assistant Nurse, I would remind the members of what took place at the special general meeting

of members which was called in March, 1939, when the Interim Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Nursing Services was being considered. I quote from the minutes of that meeting:—

“‘The Assistant Nurse.’

“‘It was agreed—

‘(a) That there should be a roll under the care of the General Nursing Council.

“‘General agreement.

“‘(b) *Title*.—On this point members were not agreed, and it was obvious that the majority did not approve of the title “Assistant Nurse.”’

“NOTE.—The general agreement arrived at by members with regard to the policy respecting the Assistant Nurse laid down in the Departmental Report was contingent on Recommendations 41 and 42 (p. 77) being implemented without delay—and before the Roll was set up—namely, that only State Registered Nurses and Assistant Nurses on the Roll should, habitually and for gain, nurse the sick.”

“The subject is again before you for consideration this afternoon.

“The report was unanimously adopted.”

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With reference to the Assistant Nurse, the President moved the following resolution:—

“That a Roll of Assistant Nurses be set up under the care of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales without delay. That the General Nursing Council be asked to implement this immediately and that compulsory registration for State Registered Nurses and Assistant Nurses be brought into force immediately after the war, together with Recommendation 42 of the Interim Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Nursing Services.”

“The resolution was seconded by Miss Cox-Davies and carried unanimously. It was agreed that a copy should be sent to the Minister of Health with a strong covering letter, in which it was pointed out that this subject had been brought to the attention of his predecessor as from a General Meeting, called in March, 1939.

“Miss Cockayne, Royal Free Hospital, referring to the Assistant Nurse, said she was aware that this matter was already under consideration, but she thought that a letter from such a General Meeting as they were taking part in would give strong support to the possibility of such a Roll being established without delay.

“Some general discussion followed, and the Conference then terminated.”

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It is apparent, therefore, from these excerpts that, far from championing the rights of Registered Nurses, the Association of Hospital Matrons, which the Report states numbers 659, are not only willing, but urgently anxious, to recognise, protect and register a less efficient standard of nurse than that made compulsory under the rules of the Nurses' Registration Acts, and for which status and protection from inefficient competition 100,000 nurses have qualified and paid. May we ask by what right the Matrons exercise their very powerful authority in this economic professional matter? Is it proposed that the “Assistant Nurse,” once granted professional status and registration, will be eligible to attain the power and privilege of a matron? If not, what right has this privileged class to adjudicate on the matter, and promote ruinous competition for the rank and file, which will not affect their own status, emoluments, or pensions? Who has authorised these 600 privileged persons to implement this depreciation of the Nursing Profession? Which bodies of organised Registered Nurses have they consulted? Have they submitted their

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