

THE BURNING QUESTION OF THE SEMI-TRAINED NURSE.

The modern girl is not usually inspired with altruism. The reason is not far to seek, but we need not emphasise it. It is an age of self-indulgence and aspirations do not attain the hill-tops. Recognise this fact, and the shortage of candidates for the arduous work of nursing the sick should cause no surprise. It is only the minority of girls who enjoy the exercise of those fine qualities of character with which those who love nursing are endowed.

So we are up against it. Two courses are open to us: the one, to educate and encourage girls to develop the higher instincts of humanity, those graces which ennoble life; the other, to accept the self-centred inferiority resulting from a low standard of idealisation. The question of the hour in the nursing profession is: Whither shall we go—up or down? We aspire, but alas! the policy of those in power in high places is apparently quite content, indeed eager, to climb down. We had hoped the age of Gamp was passed and gone for ever but alas! we are not sure; apparently, she is still with us, tolerated by the powers that be, and even encouraged to aspire to a legal status that "Sairey" even in her cups failed to visualise.

THE POLICY OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF NURSING.

The Council of the Royal College of Nursing, early this year, adopted the following Resolution:—

"That it is advisable to set up a special committee for the purpose of considering ways and means of supplementing the recommendations of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Nursing Services, especially regarding the proper control of the assistant nurse.

"The Committee to consist of 50 per cent. members of the Royal College of Nursing, and 50 per cent. representatives from kindred associations, such as the British Medical Association, the Medical Women's Federation, the British Hospitals' Association, the National Association of Local Government Officers, the County Councils' Association, the Society of Medical Officers of Health, the County and County Borough Hospital Matrons' Association, and the Association of Hospital Matrons, with power to co-opt."

It was not considered expedient at the moment to give effect to the whole resolution, but a small sub-committee to consider the most urgent problem—that of the control of the assistant nurse—has met and will shortly have its first report ready, and the Council has now decided to start work on other important aspects.

It will be well for the Registered Nurses to very carefully study the composition of the committee set up to deal with nursing conditions, presumably educational and economic—when they cannot fail to realise that the most powerful organisations of their employers have overwhelming representation upon it—a dangerous policy indeed where working women are concerned.

What right have the lay representatives of Public Bodies which employ nurses to define their educational and professional standards, or to control their economic conditions? Such control renders the status of the worker very precarious, and indeed if we scent the after-the-war policy of the workers, those who need their services must concede the first principles of life worth living;

freedom of opinion and self-determination. We strongly deprecate the composition of the Special Committee of the Royal College of Nursing to "control" the assistant nurse—or any other nurse. It is perpetuating all the basic evils of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Nursing Services, which refused direct representation to Registered Nurses' professional organisations and ignored their considered opinions.

It would be well to let sleeping dogs lie.

THE DEGRADING OF THE REGISTERED NURSE.

Four Registered Nurses have drafted "A Scheme for the Reconstruction of the Nursing Profession" and published it in a weekly journal for nurses.

Miss Evelyn Pearce, Senior Sister Tutor, Middlesex Hospital, and a member of the G.N.C.;

Mrs. B. A. Bennett, Regional Nursing Officer (Eastern Region) for the Ministry of Health;

Miss L. Snowden, Supervisor of Hospitals and Children's Homes, Essex County Council, including Supervision of Training for Assistant Nurse, which she originated in this County; and

Miss G. B. Carter, formerly Organising Secretary, Midwives' Institute, etc.

It is advanced that the two special features of the scheme are: (1) Its regional basis; and (2) The training of two grades of nurse.

The first feature would so depreciate the authority of the Matrons of hospitals that such officers would speedily cease to exist; and the second would inevitably degrade the Registered Nurse, deprive her of her present rights, title and privileges, and reduce nursing from an honourable Profession for highly-educated women to a "controlled" domestic avocation for women of inferior education and limited ability.

Regional Control.

Regional control under the Ministry of Health, as at present in force, is far from popular especially as exercised by the Sector Matrons; it encourages a type of autocracy to which so many women in public service are prone, and it would appear that a regionally organised National Nursing Service would necessitate a new type of official—a sort of Nurse-Police Officer, under whose authority both Grade 1 and Grade 2 must step lively. This supposition provides for a system of supervised servitude to which no professional woman worth her salt would submit.

Hightum and Tightum.

We are informed "that no names have been suggested for the Grade 1 and Grade 2 nurses envisaged in the scheme," but obviously they cannot be called just Grade 1 and Grade 2. The titles of Sister and Nurse have, we think, more to commend them than the alternative "Nurse" and "Invalid Attendant." Might we venture to suggest "Hightum" and "Tightum"; "Scrub" being retained for the designation of a ward maid should such officials continue to exist?

Personally we hope the honourable title of "State Registered Nurse" with the right to use the abbreviated letters "S.R.N." will see us out. Anyway, we advise our colleagues to enter the very strongest protest against their deprivation and their consequent degradation in the body politic.

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