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EDITORIAL.

TO REGISTERED NURSES—SAVE YOUR PROFESSIONAL STATUS AND ECONOMIC SECURITY.

To judge from statements appearing in the Press, it would seem that the Status and Economic Security of Registered Nurses, and with it the safety of the sick, is if possible to be undermined by the policy of the Royal College of Nursing, in its avowed campaign to have instituted, by Act of Parliament, a Register of Assistant Nurses who lack the qualifications required by a State Registered Nurse.

The *Sunday Express* of February 23rd reports that:—

“Evidence is being collected by a small Committee of the Royal College of Nursing, representing various branches of the profession. Later a larger Committee will be appointed to draft a scheme to send to the Minister of Health.

“Then the plan will be discussed by the General Nursing Council, which controls the State Register.

“The aim of the new enrolment plan is to protect the public from unqualified women who call themselves assistant nurses [all so-called assistant nurses are unqualified women.—ED.], but whose sole qualification is a few weeks' experience as probationers in a hospital. The enrolment will be introduced by Act of Parliament, which will grant a period of grace for *bona-fide* assistant nurses to enrol. After that every woman who does nursing 'habitually and for gain' will have to possess specified qualifications and pass certain examinations.”

In plain English, if the above paragraph means anything, it means that the Royal College of Nursing intends, if possible, to claim legal status for a cheap, partially-trained class of woman to nurse in economic competition with the highly qualified State Registered Nurse, whose skill is guaranteed after a thorough training of three years' practical work in hospital wards, instruction in the theory and practice of nursing, tested by examination before registration; a guarantee to the sick public of all classes that she is qualified to nurse the sick.

The Betrayal of the Nursing Profession.

The story of the attempted betrayal, both educational and economic, of the Registered Nurse now protected under the Nurses' Registration Act of 1919, is not a pretty story, in these days of avowed democracy.

Let it be recounted, now that the leaders of the Royal College of Nursing have openly declared themselves for a second-rate nursing service, and are prepared to violate the contract made with a hundred thousand efficiently trained nurses during the past twenty years,

for which they have paid; we know now which organisation of nurses is to blame for the policy of depreciation in our ranks, and for the ultimate economic impoverishment of the Registered Nurse. That is all to the good, because a straight fight for justice in the open is always more wholesome than the attempt to combat the policy of undermining us *in camera*.

Cause and Effect.

Owing to several causes there has been a shortage of probationers for thorough training in hospitals as nurses, which the uprising progress of scientific medicine requires, and which has made the extension of hospitals necessary, and as neither medicine nor surgery can survive in practice without the knowledge and skill of the efficiently trained nurse, this deficiency has been keenly realised. But to remedy this shortage, encouragement and not depreciation is necessary. The causes of shortage should be carefully considered, and if possible remedied. We would advance the reasons as follows:—

1. The demand of the average young woman of the present generation for *freedom* to enjoy life, like the proverbial cow, she wants “to jump over the moon.”

2. Highly educated girls out for a career, like the late Dr. Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, prefer one of a remunerative nature, instead of strictly limited reward, sometimes a mere pittance, from which it is difficult to provide for old age.

3. A third type of girl objects to the patronage of persons, especially women, of social eminence in control in the majority of the Nursing Services, many of whom are entirely ignorant from personal experience of a nurse's needs, never having served on ward duty for a week in their lives. Under this social system, subservience, and not merit, often spells promotion.

4. Others prefer to marry and have children.

And so on *ad infinitum*.

But to depreciate the status of the Nursing Profession attained after a monumental struggle in the last century is suicidal indeed.

The laity who manage hospitals and kindred institutions, which cannot be classed as complete training schools, may or may not be in sympathy with Nursing as a Profession. Their business is to have sick people cared for, and the demand for what are termed Assistant Nurses here arises. These employers are agitating for legal status for these workers, so that they can be more easily obtained. This demand, as can readily be realised, is an attack upon the educational and economic status of the Registered Nurse—which, ignorant as the majority of women are concerning economics,

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