

DICTATORSHIP AND DEGRADATION.

By GLADYS M. HARDY, S.R.N.

Recently, whilst being comfortably conveyed to a South Coast town on business of State, I fell to browsing on the conditions of chaos and confusion now reigning in the nursing world. The sky was gloriously blue, the time was 8 a.m. D.S.T., birds were twittering in trees thick with beautiful blossoms and Nature seemed to be at peace; in sharp contrast to the nations of mankind in general, and members of the Nursing Profession in particular.

I mused lazily on the causes of our troubles, and on their possible—though doubtful—cure, and I moodily brought to mind the indifference of the rank and file of Registered Nurses generally to their ultimate fate.

In my own mind, I am fully convinced that the real causes of all our troubles are:—

(1) The lack of definite post-graduate experience, training, and qualifications;

(2) The attempted sabotage of legal status and its attendant privileges, by the "control and enrolment of persons who have not and are not attempting to attain the recognised standard of efficiency prescribed by Act of Parliament for members of the Nursing Profession," now notoriously known as "Assistant" Nurses.

(3) The attempt to set up a dictatorship in the Profession, which aims at squashing free action and speech.

Yet these real and actual facts do not seem to be understood by nurses at all. Instead of grappling with the Government to protect the legal status of Registered Nurses, and instead of securing economic security and good conditions and pensions for them, elaborate and long-winded committees have set themselves the task of smashing all our preconceived and highly successful methods of training, and are seeking to find a new standard of basic training, about which no two people seem to be in agreement.

It is extremely difficult to understand what these committees really want to "reconstruct," especially as the members of them do not seem to know themselves. One legal gentleman requested to attend Lord Horder's Committee (which meets at the bidding of the Royal College of Nursing, and is therefore of little value to the Profession) is holding a watching brief for a most interested group of a powerful body of men, and he admits openly that he cannot "make head or tail of the deliberations of the committee" at all!

Reminiscences of Mr. Muddlecombe's administration at Nether-Backwash must permeate the committee-room, when we hear that, on the one hand, extravagant concessions and privileges are to be strewn at the feet of young aspirants who will enter for training, persevere, and finally become State Registered Nurses; and, on the other hand, others are attempting to nullify and stamp out any privileges that State Registration brings in its train, by legislating for the independence, economic security, and protection by enrolment of a formidable number of persons who have not and are not attempting to obtain this same recognised standard aforementioned.

Why—in Heaven's name—need future nurses be trained at all? Why bother to "reconstruct basic

training" when similar privileges will be conferred on trained and untrained alike? What a great saving of time could be effected and the interests of the war be better served if such useless committees were dissolved, at least until members of them knew *why* they were meeting!

I recently asked one member of the nursing world why she was so anxious to share the privileges of Registered Nurses with untrained or lay women, especially as the economic security of trained women would be so seriously jeopardised. She replied—with pious hypocrisy: "We mustn't be selfish; even if we lose a little we must see that these women are recognised and made secure." No wonder young girls look askance at us—they are not such fools; they will enter a profession only where their future and legal status is secure, and where there is no competition with quacks.

But this is not the end! Certain members of this committee are suing for powers to set up a dictatorship within our ranks. They intend to "differentiate" between girls entering the profession, and they will "grade" them and set them into two categories (*a*) and (*b*), the (*a*'s) to be the future dictators or administrators, and the (*b*'s) to be the serfs or underlings, who will do the hard and real work *all* their lives under the rigid control of the dictators. These people intend to control the general public, too, and tell them exactly whom they may have to nurse when ill! And they openly boast that the Government will give them these powers; that it is now only a matter of time!!!

Now, at this very moment, England is at deadly grips with a most powerful and lethal enemy, fighting with its best blood for freedom for individuals, that each single Briton may rise by his own ability and efforts to the very choicest jobs in the Kingdom—*regardless* of his origin! Why, then, should Lord Horder's Committee consider who shall or shall not rise to eminence in our Profession?

Registered Nurses, we *must* all demand that our rights and privileges, won at tremendous cost (I am informed that it cost our pioneers £20,000 to obtain legal status from Parliament), are not sabotaged or taken away.

We must clamour for better conditions for the sick of all classes—especially the chronic sick. We must clamour for improved prospects, and pensions and security for Registered Nurses. We must see that heavier punishments be inflicted on unscrupulous persons claiming a status not theirs by right. If conditions for Registered Nurses were made enviable and worthy of the striving of educated young girls, we should not lack aspirants to our Profession.

We must devote ourselves to attaining perfection within our ranks, so that the services of State Registered Nurses—and theirs only—will be in demand by the sick public of Great Britain.

THE DEGRADING OF THE NURSING PROFESSION.

The battle on the degrading of the Nursing Profession is beginning in earnest, and the Royal College of Nursing, we opine, is not to have a walk-over with its proposal for providing the sick with semi-skilled attendants. This policy for which the College has secured the support of highly-placed matrons in many large training schools, means the elimination of intelligent student nurses.

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