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OBITUARY.

"On June 15th, 1942, at Tunbridge Wells, very peacefully, Ethel Mary Fletcher, aged 80."

Thus simply was notified the death of a great benefactress to the Nursing Profession who, in life, specially desired that no publicity should be given to her generosity in endowing the British College of Nurses with a munificent gift of £100,000 for the benefit of nurses and standards of nursing for the welfare of the sick. Now that she has passed away, brief reference may be given to an action which may, in the future, prove of inestimable benefit to society at large.

In the year 1926, then a patient of the late Dr. Bedford Fenwick, Miss Ethel Fletcher consulted him concerning a sum of money she wished to donate to a purpose which might benefit the community. He advised her to endow a self-governing College of Nurses, as the new Profession of Nursing recently established by the Nurses' Registration Acts, which became law in 1919, was largely composed of women whose circumstances were far from affluent, and to enjoy educational and social evolution, and maintain professional dignity could only be attained by financial help. Thus the British College of Nurses came into existence, with the provision that the name of the donor should not at that time be made public.

The basic standard for Fellowship and Membership of the College was State Registration as defined by the General Nursing Councils for England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of Dominions beyond the Seas, and from these Registered Nurses the first Council of the College was appointed, and since it was an elected body has carried on the business of the College with success for 16 years—the donor and the late Dr. Bedford Fenwick acting as Trustees and Treasurer under the provisions of the Trust Deed.

In October, 1939, the death of Dr. Bedford Fenwick, the most generous friend the nurses in this country have ever had, was announced, and now, with very deep regret, we report the death of the generous donor of the Endowment Fund of the British College of Nurses.

Thus these two benefactors leave their work so well begun for us to carry on in the spirit of devotion to humanity which inspired them.

As President of the British College of Nurses, we invite those of our colleagues who realise their human, professional and civic responsibility, to associate themselves with their fellow nurses of like mind, and help to maintain the honourable status we already enjoy, and devote thought and energy to raise the standard of nursing ever higher for the benefit of the community. Let our work rank as a beneficent service for the nation.

EDITORIAL.

A HIGH PERCENTAGE OF FAILURES IN THE STATE EXAMINATIONS.

It will be seen from the list of the Final Examination, April, 1942, of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, published on page 99, that there is a high percentage of failures.

Under "General," 3,601 candidates were examined, of which 820 failed to pass.

Of 11 Male Nurses, 2 failed. Mental Nurses: Out of 76, 32 failed. Sick Children's Nurses: Out of 186, 16 failed; and Fever Nurses: 435 were present, of which 40 failed.

This is serious, as after long terms of training and service, the failures hesitate to take to other means of livelihood, and so become unregistered competitors of duly qualified Registered Nurses.

These failures mean two things: one, that our system of general education is defective—which we know it is, when compared with that of many other nations—and that the system of professional examination is not in sufficient touch with systems of preparation and professional instruction.

It is these failures which have largely fed the ranks of the Assistant Nurse, and beginning at the wrong end of organised reform, the Royal College of Nursing proposes to institute two grades of Nurses, relegating the failures and semi-trained to an inferior status, and instituting compulsion to keep these second-class workers for ever in outer darkness, a depressed and despised class.

Never since the days of the press gang has such an outrageous proposition been advanced by any class of professional women, and very surely our love of liberty and fair-play will frustrate any such proposition upon the part of Matrons in high places who, from high altitudes of economic and professional security, can behold with complacency those within their range of vision standing without the Pale.

Should Lord Horder's Reconstruction Committee agree to any such suggestion, there is little doubt it will be strenuously opposed by the somewhat limited number of Registered Nurses who possess an organising faculty, and who realise that all progress must be based on efficiency and justice. Schemes of evasion are sure to fail, and those based on a system of make-shift deserve to do so.

We may also remind the Profession of Nursing at large that Hitlerism will not be tolerated in any form whatever in the British Nursing World.

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