

THE FUTURE OF THE MEDICAL AND NURSING PROFESSIONS.

Women in Council, the news letter published monthly by the National Council of Women, recently inserted the following interesting criticism of the National Health scheme as presented in the White Paper.

The Doctor's Point of View.

Dr. Nott, in her recent address to the Bristol N.C.W., on the future of the medical and nursing professions, spoke of the B.M.A.'s publication in 1938 of their plan for a General Medical Service, and of the Government's recently published White Paper as follows:—

"It is evident that the B.M.A., while believing our medical service to be second to none in the world, not only know the defects but want to see them remedied. While the medical profession have themselves demanded reforms, they are not prepared to have any ill-conceived plans foisted on them because of political expediency. A large majority of the profession are determined to resist having a fully controlled State-salaried service. The following are some of their objections:—

1. It might be captured by Party political machines, or, at least, influence them.
2. It would limit the freedom to criticise from within the services.
3. Promotion might be by seniority alone instead of by merit and seniority combined.
4. It would mean a balance between technical and administrative forces which in civil service experience would tip the scale in favour of the latter.
5. The necessary submission to day by day inquisition by Parliament would discourage initiative and invite playing for safety.
6. The certain increase of paper work would seriously encroach upon time available for real medical work.

"In all probability the service would be strangled at birth by yes-men with yards of red tape, nobody accepting individual responsibility.

"The White Paper Dr. Nott described as being well-written, and written to win not only the public but the medical profession. Its four principles the doctors can welcome, but it is in the translation of these principles into details, as implied in the White Paper, that the profession has much to say.

"Dealing with medical research, the White Paper has no better suggestion than that it should be left to the limited means of the Research Council. The profession feels that the importance of research work in the future cannot be over-emphasised. The discovery of penicillin is worth more to the nation than the whole White Paper. The Government seems content to spend a quarter of a million annually on medical research, at a time when the country spends about 400 millions annually on tobacco."

A Warning.

The de-grading of the Nursing Profession by the Ministry of Health cannot fail to be a warning to the medical profession, and it is sincerely to be regretted that it did not use its influence to help the group of Registered Nurses who protested against legislation calculated to deprive the community of well-educated, efficiently-trained nurses, without whose assistance medical science and practice is inevitably handicapped.

There is already evidence, however, that the Assistant Nurse scheme is bound to fail, and we hope the medical profession will protect their patients from unqualified attendants.

A VILLAGE NURSE.

DIM WITH THE MIST OF YEARS.

I lately visited my birthplace which I had not seen since the tender age of eight years, when my father was Curate of the Parish Church in an old and historic country town, and where he brought up an old-fashioned family of eight children.

First of all, I wandered into the beautiful Norman Church in which he ministered in that dim past, and tried to reconstruct my childish worship within its walls. I spoke to a lady who was busy with some little duties there, and asked her for some information connected with the past. She was apparently a comparatively newcomer, but as we emerged into the churchyard, she exclaimed: "Here is some one who can tell you all you want to know."

I saw approaching the neat active figure of an elderly woman who was willing to impart all her recollections of her long life in the town.

To my amazement she told me she was 87 years old and that with the exception of a few years in service had spent the whole of her life there.

Her father she said, was cowman at the "Park," and her mother filled some domestic post in the same family. She herself was brought up to service and at an early age had a wide experience of the "gentry" in that old-world environment. Their names and those of their children were to her as household words. Captain Tom, Colonel Charlie, Miss Norah, and so on, all of which I well remembered in that dim past.

I told her my father's name and she said: "I well remember him. He used to visit our school, and he would bring some of you children with him, and sit you on a form while he spoke to the village children. She at that time must have been 11 years of age.

So she talked on till she arrived at the epoch where she became the village nurse.

I think it was at the vicarage where it was first realised the need for such a person in the parish and where the money was found for her "training."

She was sent away for one month to a maternity home, and for two months elsewhere for general experience.

"Of course, for the maternity work I only attended with the doctor."

"Eighty-seven, and not 'out,'" for she still of her kindness ministers to her poor neighbours when needed. Indeed, when I met her she was on her way to the— with a clean towel under her arm—"stonemason's wife, who, poor thing, has no one to see to her."

Apparently, her kind offices were not urgent, and she agreed willingly to accompany me to the beautiful churchyard where sleep so many of the almost forgotten, yet so closely interwoven friends of the past, including the old doctor and "Captain Tom," and the kindly vicar.

"Kind ghosts ye are that trouble not, nor fright nor sadden

But wake fond memories half forgot and thoughts that gladden."

We left that quiet resting place, watched over by the girdle of the lovely Sussex Downs, and then at my suggestion she agreed to find a place where we could have tea. She took me to a cottage tea room, looking out on to the village street, where they provided hot scones and homemade jam. More than once she said: "Well, I never thought to come out to tea to-day."

Before taking leave she pointed out her modest dwelling within the precincts of the Church. A charming cottage where she rented a room for one shilling weekly.

Her name and address? "Just Nurse S. The postman knows me."

As I am sure did everyone else in that eminently desirable spot.

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