

REPORT ON NURSES REGISTRATION, MIDWIVES, AND PRIVATE HOSPITALS ACTS, ETC.

SIR,—

Wellington, 13th August, 1909.

I have the honour to report concerning the administration of "The Nurses Registration Act, 1908," and Part II of "The Hospital and Charitable Institutions Act, 1908."

THE NURSES REGISTRATION ACT.

During the twelve months which have elapsed since the 31st March, 1908, two examinations have been held under the Nurses Registration Act—in June and December. One hundred and nineteen candidates came up for the preliminary examination in anatomy and physiology, and 106 passed. There were during the year ninety-six candidates for the final examination in medical and surgical nursing, and eighty-seven passed, and their names were placed on the register. The receipts of fees for examination and registration were £119, and the expenses in examiners' and supervisors' fees £128. The various medical practitioners and nurses who were during 1907 appointed as a Board of Examiners have given much assistance in valuable suggestions and advice regarding the training of nurses and in conducting the written, oral, and practical examinations in as uniform and thorough a manner as possible.

Early in the year new and full regulations were drawn up under the Nurses Registration Act, some of those previously in force having become obsolete owing to various clauses of the Act rendered necessary at the beginning of its existence being no longer in operation. These regulations came into force in January, 1909, and instituted some small changes in the training and qualification of nurses and registration. The examination in anatomy and physiology, which in the past has been held by the State, has now been deputed to the hospital authorities, and may be held as soon as possible after the conclusion of the first year of training, thus leaving two years in which the trainees may devote their whole time to the more practical and important study of medical and surgical nursing.

A subject which has also been on the syllabus for study has been made compulsory in that a certificate of having attended a course of lessons and passed an examination in invalid cookery must be produced with applications to sit for the final State examination. The syllabus of lectures for nurses in training schools has been revised after consultation with the various examiners and teachers, and slightly altered and added to. The necessary minimum number of lectures each year has increased, and a report from each training school, with names of trainees, number of lectures, and names of lectures, is required to be furnished annually. It has been found that the work of training nurses has been very lightly undertaken by some of the smaller hospitals, and that, while professing to carry on a systematic course of teaching, it has been performed in a very perfunctory manner, which is neither fair to the young women who give their services for small payment with the hope of obtaining a certificate of training and so becoming registered nurses, nor to the public who afterwards employ them. Therefore some proof must be afforded that at least the minimum amount of teaching laid down by the regulations has been given, or trainees from these hospitals cannot be allowed to go up for examination.

It has been found necessary to make centres for examination in other places than those first selected. Wanganui and Palmerston have both been used as centres, the reason being that a large number of nurses in their third year being taken from the hospital for the two or three days necessary in travelling to the chief centres and undergoing the two days' examination disorganized the work of the hospitals. Therefore it has been conceded that if the number of candidates in one hospital exceed four, and the journey to a chief centre takes one day, the examination will be held in that hospital with, if possible, trainees from neighbouring hospitals for the oral examination and that in practical work.

The proposed amendments to the Act dealing with the training of nurses in certain approved private hospitals and in mental hospitals and consumptive sanatoria have not yet come forward, and, in view of the probable passing in Great Britain of a Bill for the registration of nurses, in which one clause reads—"Any person who shall produce evidence satisfactory to the Council of having been trained as a nurse and registered in any British possession in which a Nurses Registration Act is in force, and which admits to its register British registered nurses on reciprocal terms, may, upon payment of the fee payable on the registration of other persons, be registered under this Act, provided that the standard of training and examination in such British possession is equivalent to the standard adopted by the Council"—it would perhaps be advisable to wait until we can know the regulations for the training of nurses, which will be formulated by the Board appointed by Parliament to carry out the provisions of the Bill when it becomes an Act.

New Zealand nurses have been well received at Home, and there are a number there now engaged in nursing. It will be necessary, if this Bill passes, for us to see that a good standard of training is maintained, so that a nurse going from New Zealand may be received and registered in Great Britain. The weak point will probably prove to be that here hospitals of a small number of beds are allowed to be training schools, and although under the conditions of this young country—and with the constant scarcity of trained nurses—it is difficult to see how this can be avoided, yet it is most important to all our future nurses that their professional position should be unassailable all over the world, and especially in our Motherland.

Mental Nurses.

An examination in mental nursing was held by the Inspector-General of Mental Hospitals in December and January. Forty-six entered, and twenty-four passed. Two mental trained nurses are now undergoing a special course of two years' general training in the New Plymouth and Wanganui Hospitals.