

A National Association for Nurses and its Legal Organisation.*

By Miss L. L. Dock.

(Continued from page 232.)

HAVING started this basis, which on the whole is tolerably comprehensive, other schools may be admitted by the rules of the Association.

The admission of new schools will be an important and abiding question, and the committee charged with this duty should be a most carefully chosen one. The Association of Collegiate Alumnae had a good deal of trouble at first with irresponsible nominations for the admission of new schools. In 1892 the Committee on Colleges presented a report suggesting that in the future a method be adopted which would prevent application from without the Association, and the following resolution was adopted: "New Institutions shall be nominated for membership in the Association by any five members of the Executive Committee, who shall represent five different Institutions already enrolled as corporate members of the Association." In proposing the above the report goes on to say: "The committee have had in mind two distinct ends regarded by them as of equal importance. First, to provide for the Association a safeguard against irresponsible nominations which force the Executive Committee to an examination of the Institutions in question, and to a definite decision concerning them; and second, to afford by this new method of nominations as full an opportunity as possible for a wise extension of the corporate membership of the Association." To adopt at the outset some such plan would probably save us trouble.

Having decided what schools, as such, may be eligible for membership, let us glance at the plans of organisation, beginning at the small end. It will be seen to be quite necessary that the associated alumnae of such schools form comprehensive local societies similar to the county or city society of the Medical Association. Nurses scatter over the country and move away from the neighbourhood of their own schools, and it should be made possible for all who are eligible to join a local Society in whatever part of the country they are, just as church members take their letters about and connect themselves with churches wherever they go. Beside this, if a Nurse is a thousand miles away from her alumnae Society, she is completely removed from its discipline and influence. If, then, she commit some breach of professional honour, who is

there to check or censure her? Such a case could only be reached by a local Society covering the whole ground within certain limits, to which all eligible Nurses within those limits should connect themselves.

They must have their officers, laws and by-laws, business meetings, and plans of interesting and holding their members, and for maintaining a standard. They should be incorporated. They will elect delegates to the State societies. The State societies will be incorporated under State laws, elect officers, hold stated meetings, and supervise the whole field of nursing in the State. They will elect delegates to the National Association.

Now to look over the plan again with reference to the actual steps in organisation, we begin with the central body and work outward.

The first thing to be done would be to call a Convention for the purpose of preparing a constitution. Let us suppose that this Society of Superintendents first calls upon the alumnae societies of, let us say, the twelve oldest schools whose alumnae are organised, to send each one delegate from among private duty Nurses; and second, elects an equal number of its own members to meet with them as a convention charged with the duty of preparing a National Constitution.

This constitution should indicate among its other articles the requirements for admission of new schools, the plan of representation by delegates from State societies, and in a broad way, the essentials of the State constitutions. Preliminary articles, drawn up by this convention, should arrange for the constitution to be sent to the Presidents of the alumnae associations, with the message that they submit it to their respective societies, and in due time, if it be accepted, take the necessary steps toward forming the State unions. As fast as these are organised the officers of the convention should be notified and delegates elected to form the national meetings. In States where only one eligible alumnae society may exist, its representation could be provided for until such time as a State union might develop.

As our practical interest will always be small compared with those of an ethical and educational nature, you all realise that we shall imperatively need a national code of ethics, something similar to that of the American Medical Association, to be our one common bond of union, and our one, at present, fixed standard. It is so all-important that this code be universally recognised and adopted, that it might perhaps be advisable not to draw it up until at least a majority of the States had formed their State unions, but *before* they had taken out their Charters.

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[previous page](#)

[next page](#)