

### Report of the Fifth Annual General Meeting of the Dutch Nursing Association.

THIS year The Hague, our beautiful and princely residence, was chosen as the place where the Fifth Annual General Meeting of the Dutch Nursing Association was to be held, in order to give the members and donators of the "Bond" an opportunity of visiting, at the same time, the National Exhibition of Women's Work, and assisting in the Congress-Hall at the lecture of Dr. Catharine van Tussenbroek, on "The Lack of Vital Energy in our Young Women and Girls." A numerous audience followed with great interest and warm sympathy the discourse, the contents of which are strongly summed up in the following conclusions:—

- I.—The lack of vital energy in our young women and girls is of a psychological—not of a somatical—nature.
- II.—Its principal cause is discontentment, called forth by an existence that is not inspired by earnest duty, and in which a distinct aim, attainable by honest exertion, is wanting.
- III.—It is increased by a depressing sense of uselessness and economic dependence, and finally leads to physical deterioration.
- IV.—The disease alluded to is chiefly caused by a wrong education, especially by the training of our girls for matrimony, leading unavoidably to falsehood and deceit, and economic dependence.
- V.—Considering the present state of things, the remedy is only to be sought for in this one direction: a sound and professional training for some profession or trade, in order to enable women to live on self-earned bread.

This lecture of our eminent lady doctor made a deep and lasting impression on the minds of all those who had the privilege of hearing her.

At four o'clock the Fifth Annual General Meeting of the Dutch Nursing Association was opened by the chairman, Dr. J. Kniper, Medical Superintendent of the Wilhelmina-Hospital at Amsterdam. He informed his hearers of the fact, that the Board of Management of the "Bond" has tried to obtain a survey of the state of sick-nursing in the Dutch hospitals: the conditions under which the nurses in the different hospitals are working; the number of the patients trusted to their care; the working-hours and leisure time; the time granted for the various meals, salary, pension, etc.

I know very well, the Chairman went on, that those material conditions don't positively decide the question whether our hospital nurses are always treated as they ought to be, but we dare not ask more. We have given to those questions

a confidential character, being perfectly aware of the urgent necessity that the uttermost discretion should be applied in judging the answers, and also that only competent persons should perform the act of judging, and *not* self-conceited, pedantic criticisers, whose number is legion in this world. In connection with this the "Bond" convened a meeting on the 20th of May, at which were present the Boards of Management and the Matrons of the various hospitals.

The conclusions adopted on that occasion have appeared in the issue of June 15th, of the *Maandblad voor Ziekenverpleging*, being the organ of the "Bond." In those conclusions the minimum demands are laid down, to which the hospitals have to answer with regard to their nurses.\*

I should like to lay stress upon the necessity of remembering the fact that *not* the "Bond," consisting of a certain number of members, more or less fit to judge in nursing matters, has fixed those rules, but a select body of fully competent persons, for it is this very fact that gives value to the conclusions. Although we highly appreciate the interest shown by laymen in all matters concerning the conditions under which nurses are performing their noble duty, we feel bound to utter a warning against all exaggerated efforts to facilitate nursing work. It is never to be forgotten that a hospital is not a manufactory, and nurses are not to be manufactured.

Surely it is not blameworthy that a young woman devotes herself to sick-nursing, as a means of earning her living, but she should only do so when she feels a vocation for the task of soothing the pain of her suffering fellow-creatures, and exerting all her physical strength in order to help them.

Such a person would also have become a nurse, if she had been wholly independent in financial respects. It is our duty to take care, that in the nursing corps are not admitted women, who talk very much of "devotion" and "self-sacrifice," without, however, possessing themselves a little bit of those invaluable and indispensable qualities. Therefore, we must persevere in our efforts to keep from the ranks of our nursing army all useless, and detrimental elements. Let the name, *Nurse*, always be a title of honour!

From the annual report, read by the hon. secretary and treasurer, Lady De Bosch Kemper, the assembly learned that there was not very much new to tell. The number of members and donators had remained pretty well the same. Last year a committee had been constituted at Alkman with the view of raising a general pension fund for nurses. The board of management of the "Bond" had failed in its efforts to

\* See for this matter the issue of July 2nd of the *Nursing Record*

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