

The International Congress of Nurses.

MORNING SESSION.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19TH, 1901.

NURSING EDUCATION.

DISCUSSION ON MISS L. L. DOCK'S PAPER, WHAT ARE WE DOING WITH THE THREE YEARS' COURSE?

(Continued from page 67.)

Mrs. ROBB: I would like to know how old the nurses are when they get through with their training.

Miss ISLA STEWART: We receive candidates at the age of twenty-one years on payment of a fee of \$10. We also receive free candidates at the age of twenty-three years. They have all to serve three years before they obtain their certificate, and one year after that, but in the former case the hours are shorter, and the work somewhat lighter during the first six months.

It is not optional. The candidates sign an agreement before entering the service of the hospital, in which they promise to remain in its service for a period of four years; the fourth year being spent as staff nurse in the hospital, or on the Private Staff of nurses.

Miss C. J. WOOD (England): I just want to say a word about preliminary training, going back to the beginning of all things. I have seen a very great deal of physical breakdown on the part of nurses. From having the theory and practice carried on simultaneously, the poor nurse with aching feet and tired muscles after her hard work in the day goes into her room, throws herself on to her bed, and with her text book endeavours to acquaint herself with the theory. I am down to the ground in accord with the argument of Miss Dock that the physiology, hygiene, etc., can be gone through with before we go into the wards, and if it was so it would make a very great difference with this matter. Take the average woman who comes into the hospital and is turned into the ward, what does she know of the language of the hospital, I mean of the use of the technical terms. She is told to go and bring something; some vessel of some kind, and she rushes off thinking the whole time she only hopes she may bring the right thing. That means mental and physical wear and tear.

If before she comes into the hospital wards she has had various vessels etc. pointed out to her and named, when she comes into the ward and is told to go after something she will go and get it. I do think the present arrangement by which nurses are taught theory and practice at the same time is one of the great reasons for their breaking down.

Speaking from my own experience (and I stand before you not as a trained nurse, because there was no training in my day, but we learned from practice, without theory), I remember quite well the first few months I was in the hospital being told to put a poultice on the back of the chest. Where on earth was the back of the chest; I really did not know.

I do hope that we shall find out some means by which we can teach our pupils theory and practice somewhat apart. I agree most thoroughly with Miss Dock in her suggestions on that matter.

Mrs. ROBB: I should like to say that the object in creating the third year of training in this country is

intended to be educational, and for the benefit of the nurse, but so far as we can see to the present time, the greater benefit has been to the hospitals. We found that it was utterly impossible in two years to cover a systematic course of training. Some of the subjects were too advanced for the second year, and were obviously third year's subjects.

And in addition the hours of work in the wards were too long and it was too much to ask nurses to work so many hours a day, and then ask them in that time to pursue a course of study and get it all in in two years. Therefore when the third year was advocated at our first National Congress, the proposal that the nurse would not be required to spend more than eight hours out of the 24 in practical work in the hospital, and that a certain portion be devoted to her theoretical instruction met with approval, but that feature has not been attained except in two or three instances I am sorry to say, and the same hours 9, 10, 11, and sometimes 12 or even more are required of our pupil nurses in our hospitals.

A MEMBER: I would like to say just one word, and that is, that I represent a hospital where practically the idea which Miss Stewart has presented is upheld. We have been able to do much in the way of shortening nurses' hours, but I have been told repeatedly by the nurses themselves how much they appreciated their third year, and how much they learned in their third year.

MISS PETERS: I would like to add that our hospital in connection with its three years' course gives a year's course to the nurses immediately after they graduate, and there is a certificate given at the end of that time, the fourth year. It is not compulsory and they are paid \$25 per month. I do not wish to be understood that I disapprove of the three years course, but I do disapprove of sending nurses out during that time. I myself was out nearly all the time during the last year and missed all the important lectures, finally I requested to be kept in, and when in I sat up at night, and got up at 4 and 5 o'clock in the morning to study for my examinations.

Miss BARNARD: I would request that some of those who have had experiences on the non-payment side of the three years' course would relate them.

Mrs. ROBB: There are eight hours on the non-payment system. The whole idea was to have a three years' course, eight hours' practice in the wards, and non-payment. The whole thing was to be put on the non-payment basis. In all our old circulars of information we added a paragraph saying that for the first year the monthly remuneration was seven or nine dollars, and the second year a little less, in the next sentence saying that this was not intended as remuneration, but for text books, uniforms, etc. I could never understand, then, why less should be given in the first year when everything has to be supplied, and when I became superintendent I could not recommend that system because it was not just, and it seemed to me better to put the whole thing on an educational basis. The students work for what they get in the way of education, and value what they get, but it seems to me no more than fair that the hospital should in return furnish the uniforms and text books for their work. I think if we all look back we can recall how our money was spent each month, how much of it went for uniforms and text books. I do know from my own experience as a

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