

It being admitted that the nursing of the sick is a matter which closely affects every class of the community, and that it is therefore of extreme importance to the public welfare that those who undertake the responsible duties of sick nursing should be, not only absolutely trustworthy from a personal point of view, but skilled also in their technical duties, it follows that it is the duty of the State to provide public safeguards in this matter. It is, therefore, suggested that the Legislature in each country should pass an Act forming

A GENERAL NURSING COUNCIL.

This body should be empowered to deal with all educational matters affecting Nurses, that is to say, to define the precise curriculum through which every woman must pass before she can be certificated as a trained nurse. It must define the period of her training, and the subjects of her education; and no Nurse would then be permitted to offer herself for examination until she produced a schedule duly signed by the Matron of her training school testifying as to her general good conduct and practical proficiency, and by the lecturers upon the different subjects in the curriculum, testifying that she had attended the regulation number of lectures and demonstrations on each subject. It would be the duty of the General Nursing Council to appoint examiners, and hold examinations, and to grant to candidates who passed those examinations a State Diploma in Nursing. It would be the duty of the Nursing Council to register nursing qualifications. It is probable that it would call into existence Nursing Colleges to facilitate its educational work. The first result, therefore, of the appointment of such a Council would be that a uniform system of nursing education, and a uniform standard of qualification, would be established throughout the country in question. Because, it is almost needless to add, that the Nursing Act would make Registration essential as a qualification to practice; and that no one would be permitted under heavy penalties to term herself a trained Nurse, or to take any fee or reward as such, unless she were duly registered. Then, again, it would be the duty of the General Nursing Council to strike off from their list the name of any Registered Nurse who proved herself to be unworthy of trust and professional confidence. So, on the one hand, the public would be protected against the ignorant and inefficient persons who now can term themselves trained Nurses, can obtain the most responsible work in that capacity, and so bring danger to the sick. And the Nursing Profession would be protected against those members of the calling who bring discredit on its fair name, and on all their fellow workers. It would be the duty of the Nursing Council to publish each year a complete list of its Registered Nurses, showing the names and addresses, the date of Registration, and the nursing qualifications possessed by each Nurse, in parallel columns against her name; so that in future any person desiring information on the subject, could by reference to the Register of trained Nurses, ascertain at once with certainty whether any given person were or were not a trained Nurse; and, in the latter event, precisely what nursing qualifications she possessed.

Then we come to the Constitution of the Nursing Council. Without going into arguments which would be out of place on this occasion, I would briefly say that the Council should be constituted so as to represent the different interests involved. First, the Government of the country by established custom

demands its own representatives on such a Council. The training schools of the country should possess representatives who would be of the greatest possible practical assistance in the determination of the great educational question with which the Council would be called upon to deal, and the Registered Nurses themselves, whose interests would be those most involved, should, I consider, be given an ample representation, and should be entitled to elect by ballot a certain number to represent them on the General Nursing Council of their country.

Mrs. King Roberts (Cambridge), in response to the Chairman's invitation to members of the audience to speak, said that she hoped to learn what there was to be said against so apparently simple and desirable a measure as that of State Registration. She had, however, failed to hear a single argument against it. She only heard hints of the difficulties which beset the question. To her it appeared that State Registration of Nurses was essential. What guarantee had the public at present of the professional qualifications and personal suitability of the nurses whom they admitted to close intimacy in their homes in times of stress and strain. She thought registration would be an enormous advantage. The only reason she had heard advanced against it was that the time had not come yet. She thought it was time for nurses to be united on this question. While they were divided the public suffered, and she could not see how nurses benefited. She thought it should be their policy to draw in members of the outside public. The main demand for registration must come from the general public—from men as well as women. Then it would not be long before they obtained it.

In closing the Meeting the Chairman expressed the opinion that although the demand for registration had come from the nurses, this reform must ultimately be effected by the public. Therefore it was necessary that those nurses who desired it should have the public on their side, and they must all use their influence to educate public opinion.

The proceedings then terminated.

Organization of the New Society.

The Sub-Committee appointed to organise an effective Executive Committee will meet at an early date, I shall therefore be pleased to hear from the Local Hon. Secretaries on the matter. I would suggest that they should send a list of the names of ladies and gentlemen whom they think might take an interest in the work of the Society, who might be invited to take seats on the Executive, or to become Vice-Presidents.

It is most desirable that interest should be aroused all over the country in this vital question of State Registration of Trained Nurses.

Copies of the Matrons' Council Memorandum on the subject, approved by Miss Louisa Stevenson, our President, also copies of the Constitution, will be available in a few days, for the use of Local Secretaries, and should save superfluous writing, for which busy women have so little time.

ETHEL G. FENWICK,
Hon. Secretary.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)