

Nursing Echoes.

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With the first of October and the re-opening of the medical schools, Matrons, Sisters, and nurses are returning from holiday-making, and will settle down to the winter's work in real earnest. Soon, no doubt, we shall hear that the nursing societies are also arranging meetings in furtherance of the special objects of each, and business instead of

enjoyment will be the order of the day. No class of workers need or deserve their holidays more thoroughly than nurses; let us hope they have returned, refreshed and rested, with plenty of energy to face the busy months of nursing the winter brings in its train, and with bright intelligence for the solution of the many problems which confront them in the course of the evolution of their profession.

In the last annual report of the Royal National Pension Fund for Nurses a supplementary report was promised as soon as the consulting actuary, Mr. George King, had completed his investigations and reported. An abstract of the third quinquennial valuation has now been issued, and from this it appears that on December 31st last there were 7,161 policies in existence, securing annuities amounting to £115,705, and annuities were being paid under 610 policies. Under the head of "profit bonus" the liabilities amounted to £601,459, while the funds in hand were £629,404, showing a surplus of £27,944 odd. The accumulation of interest in connection with "donation bonus" available for distribution was £8,621. The Council have decided to distribute £26,000 of the profit and the whole of the amount available for donation bonus, making a total sum at their disposal of £34,621 (a sum of over £17,600 in excess of 1897), which is now being distributed. There is one feature of the report to which the Council direct the special attention of policy-holders and of nurses generally—namely, that the valuation of the Fund once more establishes the fact that nurses as a body are long-lived—longer lived, in fact, than women in other walks of life—and this is a point which nurses ought to have brought forcibly before them, the more so, because there is undoubtedly an idea prevalent that the reverse is the case, and

that nurses die young. Mr. King states that if the annuitants had been average women, meaning women in ordinary walks of life, the number of deaths during the last five years would have been 32, while, as a matter of fact, there were only 23. Amongst the holders of sickness assurance policies the number of deaths was 21, whereas, according to the Government annuity tables, the number expected was 70. At the same time, the fact must not be overlooked that the working years of the nurses are in reality fewer than those of other women, consequently it behoved them to begin early and continue adding to the provision which they had made for themselves. The report states that, the object of the Fund being to give a nurse as large an annuity as possible, the principle of the distribution of bonus is that she shall benefit by the additions when she enters upon her pension. Bonuses, therefore, are not distributed in cash, or applied to the purpose of reducing the premiums.

We offer our sincere sympathy to Miss Frost, the Matron of St. Luke's Hospital, Halifax, in the unpleasantness to which she has been subjected because she had occasion to find fault with a subordinate official, the Night Superintendent. Miss Frost advised the Night Superintendent, Miss Smithers, to resign, and, on her declining to do so, reported the circumstances to Mr. Tillotson, the Chairman of the Hospital Committee, who advised the same course. Miss Smithers thereupon wrote a letter to the Board of Guardians, and a special committee was appointed to consider the matter, and report. Of this letter the Committee say: "The letter, in our opinion, contained grave imputations on the characters of the Matron and the Chairman of the Hospital Committee." The Committee interviewed over thirty persons, including members of the hospital staff and two medical officers, and eventually, while recommending that both Miss Frost and Miss Smithers should be asked to resign their appointments, reported, amongst other findings:—

That there is no foundation for the inference to be drawn from Miss Smithers' letter reflecting on the personal character of Mr. Tillotson and Miss Frost, and that any suggestion of the kind is cruel and unjustifiable.

Mrs. G. H. Smith said that after the result of that inquiry she thought Mr. Tillotson would stand before the town a nobler man than ever before. Her idea of Miss Frost was that she was a noble and good woman. Miss Frost had sent in her resignation because she felt she had lost the confidence of the majority of the Hospital Committee. The cause of this loss of confidence was that something had come into that Committee, some insinuation had gone round, and had been enlarged. There was no disturbance at the hospital until the letter was sent

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