

The Organisation of the Nursing Profession.*

BY ITS MEMBERS: BY THE STATE.
By MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK.

The organisation of the Nursing Profession should be based on the Graduate Vote, and any form of organisation which omits this proviso is unsound in its constitution.

The professional enfranchisement of every trained nurse must be secured in any system of organisation which can hope to promote individual responsibility and healthy professional progress.

Thus the methods by which their profession is organised are of the utmost importance to nurses in every country.

I would divide the subject upon which I have the honour of addressing this important Conference into two parts, in order to secure both brevity and simplicity.

(1) The organisation of the Nursing Profession by its members.

(2) The organisation of the Profession by the State, for the protection of trained nurses and the public.

I may define the first part of the subject as social, economic, and political in its objects, whilst the second part is, in its results, educational and disciplinary.

With regard to the first division of the subject, the organisation of nurses by nurses, it has been proved by experience, both in the United States of America, and Great Britain and Ireland, that this can best be done by first associating together the Superintendents of Training Schools and nursing institutions in one Society, and by associating graduate nurses in groups of Leagues or Societies of the nurses trained in one school, and of those associated together in one particular branch of work—such as private or district nursing—and further by delegation forming a National Association or Council of Nurses, on which every affiliated group has direct representation. Organisation on these lines has proved most representative in countries where there are great numbers of trained nurses, in countries where the numbers are limited a National Association may be formed of individuals by direct membership.

Thus, in organising our National Council of Nurses of Great Britain and Ireland, we hope to include various groups of self-governing nurses.

(a) Leagues of Nurses attached to hospitals

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in which every nurse certificated by the school is eligible for membership: also Leagues of the certificated members of Corporate Bodies of Nurses, and of Government Nursing Departments.

(b) Co-operations for Private Nursing Employment.

(c) Societies for defence, and for professional protection, and improvement.

(a) The Hospital Leagues as already established in England, are capable, of course, of enormous development in the future. Their chief usefulness is the inculcation of professional *esprit de corps*, that those who leave their training school can still keep in touch with it, and feel themselves a corporate part of it, whilst the members who find their sphere of usefulness within the hospital walls, are brought into contact with the wider province of nursing outside, and gain immensely by extended sympathy with, and an increased knowledge of, its ever increasing influence as a factor in social reform. Great questions which must effect nurses individually, such as professional legislation, educational, and political movements, can be considered and debated, and if duty demands conjoint action can be taken.

Thus, through their Leagues, nurses possess a definite voice in the decision of questions of national rather than parochial importance. By social gatherings the members also keep in kindly association with one another, learn of one another's successes and sorrows, and share in each.

(b) Co-operations, as they exist at present for private nursing employment, will, I believe, steadily increase in number in the future, as the success of those which have already been established, and the great benefits they confer upon their members, and upon the public who employ them, become more universally recognised. These co-operations are formed of certificated nurses who each pay a small sum, 5—10 per cent., on their weekly earnings, which suffices to meet the expenses of a central office and clerical work.

(c) When an Act of Parliament is passed in any country for the Registration of Nurses, and the nursing profession becomes recognised by the public as well as by the State, there will arise cases in which nurses will be attacked, as the members of other professions have been. Then there would soon be recognised the necessity which other professions have realised, of forming societies to provide legal advice and defence for individual nurses. Each nurse would pay a small annual subscription, which would en-

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