

## Our Foreign Letter.

FROM HOLLAND.



On Sunday, July 5th, our Association held its eighth general meeting. Mrs. Aletrino was in the chair.

In her address of welcome she said that that day she performed her task with a singular pleasure, because we had gained so much this year and felt hopeful about the future. This year for the first time we heard some words of appreciation, instead of scorn and disdain. Other voices than ours, have been heard speaking about abuses and showing the means of improvement. The first one, who openly took our side was a doctor, who published a pamphlet on State examination for nurses. The Dutch Society for Psychiatry and Neurology has made an inquiry as to the desirability of State examinations for mental nurses. The conclusions they arrived at, are that in those countries where State registration has been obtained the results are very satisfactory. In their report they quote first all the arguments in favour of State examinations (taken out of our petitions), and embrace them all, then they quote the arguments of our opponents, and give as their opinion that these arguments are most futile. The attitude of the Bond voor Ziekenverpleging (Association for promoting the interests of nursing) in this question is, as always, irresolute and hesitating. The President of that Association said some weeks ago at a meeting "that our petition to the Government was a good thing; that the present system of training is bad; that he is opposed to State examinations; but that it would be the right thing if State examinations were instituted." Now, could anything be more contradictory? Then he continued to say that "the hospitals are not able to give sufficient training, because the number of probationers is too large in proportion to the number of trained nurses; because the instruction is insufficient, the courses being too few and given at unsuitable times (mostly in the evening hours); because the probationers do not always pass through all the divisions of the hospital, for which reason many of them, on leaving, own that their practical knowledge of the science of nursing is incomplete." Our astonishment on hearing these words knew no bounds. Why, these are the very abuses we have been fighting against for some eight years, for doing which we were called by some members of the Bond firebrands, revolutionists, slanderers of Holland's honour abroad, etc., etc. And now their President says the same things and is applauded, or was he applauded because his conclusion was after all, that State interference was not wanted? That question remains unsettled, no discussion following on this not very clear speech. But public interest is

awakening; ever and anon the question of State examinations is hinted at in newspaper articles and in periodicals. Mrs. Aletrino concluded her speech by once again saying what Nosokomos wants, and that is: a thorough preliminary training, a theoretical and practical training in the hospitals, the courses in the medical part being given by doctors, the systematical and practical instruction in the science of nursing being given by trained nurses. During training the practical work in the wards should not last longer than six to eight hours, so that there remains sufficient time for study. The hospitals should appoint more trained nurses, especially teacher-nurses. All of them should have shorter working-hours and better salaries.

## THE SECRETARY'S REPORT.

The Secretary's report gave a survey of last year's work. Nearly all the time was given to working for State registration. The results were the two petitions, of which I spoke in a former letter. The members are steadily, but slowly increasing; here just as everywhere the indifference and lethargy of the nurses, even when it concerns their own interests, is something extraordinary. It seems well-nigh impossible to rouse most of them to take any interest in the struggle for better conditions and better training. A great deal of this apathy is certainly caused by bodily and mental fatigue, but also by the strange life, so shut off from the outer world, which they have in the hospitals. She remembered very gratefully the kind help given to her by the secretaries of nursing associations and other persons, well known in the nursing world of Germany, England, and America, in obtaining suitable work for at least twelve members of Nosokomos. All this was an outcome of the International Nursing Conference at Paris, and the best proof of the great importance of these international congresses.

## RESOLUTIONS.

The only resolution taken by the meeting that will interest you, is the appointment of a committee, which will draw up a scheme for a course for Matrons. Happily, some of the younger members of our profession are awakening to the fact that a nurses' training is quite insufficient for those who aspire to the places of Head Nurse (I believe you call them Sisters) and Matron.

I hope that my next letter will contain more important news about our progress. Matters are progressing very slowly; still we feel grateful that the question, whether the sick are well nursed, is beginning to be spoken about outside the nursing world. We must now not only keep that little flame of public interest burning, but win public persons for our cause. We feel confident that the Bond, now that it has so frankly owned that matters are not as they should be, thereby granting the importance of improvement (they have for many years been trying to get uniformity in training and things are still a hopeless muddle) will by and bye join us and work with us to obtain State examinations.

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