

## The British College of Nurses, Ltd.

A MEETING OF THE Council of the British College of Nurses, Ltd., was held at 19, Queen's Gate, London, S.W.7, on Wednesday, December 13th, 1950, at 2.30 p.m.

Vice-President Miss Dorothy de M. Warren, D.N. (Lond.) was in the chair and there were present: Miss Thurnham, S.R.N., Vice-President; Mrs. Thomas Barber, D.N. (Lond.); Miss A. S. Bryson; Miss M. B. MacKellar, S.R.N., Fellows, and Miss Bunch, S.R.N., Miss A. A. Ward, S.R.N., Members.

Prayers having been read, the Minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.

Miss Warren on rising wished to express, on behalf of the meeting, very sincere sympathy with their President, Miss McLoughlin, in her serious illness, which prevented her being present, and felt sure everyone would be relieved to learn that she was making very satisfactory progress. That a message of affectionate greeting accompanied with flowers be sent from the Council to her with warm wishes for a speedy return to health was heartily accorded.

Under Business Arising, a letter of thanks was reported from Miss Dillner on behalf of the Swedish Nurses Association, expressing appreciation of hospitality extended by The British College of Nurses, Ltd. to some 21 Swedish Matrons when they were entertained to dinner at the Regent Palace Hotel, while visiting this country.

Of the correspondence dealt with, considerable discussion took place re a communication which was brought to the notice of the Council concerning the alleged neglect of patients by nurses in some hospitals, published in the Press. The meeting was unanimously of the opinion that under the stress of the acute shortage of nursing staff and a long waiting list, steps should be taken to arrest the growing decline in bedside nursing and consequently the ill-repute into which bedside nursing is falling—reports of treatment unheard of less than fifty years ago—so apparent especially in the experience of elderly sufferers.

### Election of Fellows and Members

Applications for membership were received and all were elected.

### Financial Statement.

A satisfactory financial statement was presented.

### Bring and Buy Sale.

It was reported that the Bring and Buy Sale held at the College on Saturday, October 14th, was well supported by Fellows and Members of the College who gave many charming gifts and donations, for which the Council expressed their gratitude and warm thanks to all concerned.

To the generosity and devoted activity of the staff warm thanks are due for the excellent arrangements and delicious tea served which was so greatly appreciated by the company.

### Lectures.

Arrangements are being made for the continuation of Lectures to take place early in the New Year.

## What our Fellows and Members are Doing.

### What is Nursing?

OUR READERS ARE, we believe, always interested to learn how their colleagues fare when in other countries, and we publish some news from a member working in South Africa—sadly significant of the chaotic conditions in the Nursing Profession today—dated September 25th, who writes: "It is very pleasing to receive the JOURNAL each month. What I am now writing to you about is the editorial in the

JOURNAL for August, 1950, which compels me to say how very apt are the words, so many times have I asked that same question in my own mind 'What is nursing? and what constitutes a nurse?' I echo those words!

"Unfortunately I cannot tell you that the nursing problems are any better out in South Africa than in Britain. There are naturally good and poor nurses and hospitals everywhere in the world. . . . Here the private hospitals or nursing homes owned by syndicates of doctors, actually advertise for nurses, adding: 'No previous experience necessary.' Girls of 16 and 17 apply and are accepted, mostly they appear to be girls leaving school, who have failed to attain their junior certificate. You can imagine the type—the majority have no interest in their work at all.

"They are not trained in the simple duties of nursing and appear to be hopeless. The trained staff seem to have given up the task of trying to teach them simple nursing details as the coming and going makes it impossible. An appalling state of affairs—and who suffers? The patient every time! What appals me is the lack of caring for the patient—the comfort and niceties seem to be no more.

"Patients get up very soon these days—which of course we know is to the good, but once the patient gets out of bed the idea seems to be 'Oh! That patient is all right now, and can do for herself or himself, so the nursing touch appears to vanish! *What is nursing?*' A Health Visitor colleague of mine in England tells the story of the father of an eminent obstetrician who was very ill, and had quite a succession of nurses before one suited him. At last the nurse whom he chose seemed a most ordinary person, and the son asked his father why he liked this nurse so much in preference to the previous nurses. 'My boy,' said the patient, 'she has a charming manner with the bed pan!!' How true—how many of these little acts need to be emphasised in caring for the sick these days. Patients still have reticence and feelings, but it seems with modern ways these things are forgotten.

"I have been doing private nursing—which has been quite enjoyable—just now I am working in one of these large privately-owned hospitals—owned by doctors and, I am sorry to say, run almost entirely for money. There is no personal touch as I had in my own small 'home' in England. I am enjoying seeing the country and the ways of life—but I do wish the standard of nursing was higher.

"I have rambled on and still have not said all I want to say about these 'nursing aids' (as the assistant nurse is termed in South Africa). After a few months in one of the private hospitals, these nursing aids join a private nurses' institution and go out to private cases—earning one or two guineas per week less than the fully-trained Sister. . . . There is no wonder that well-educated girls do not wish to train as nurses today, when they see what is happening to the profession—I cannot help but a little blame for the doctors for not demanding a higher standard. The British College has always fought for what I have been trying to say.

"I have not told you anything nice about S.A., or interesting—that will have to come another time!"

## Sister Dora's Birthday.

SISTER DORA'S BIRTHDAY is on Tuesday, January 16th, and following the custom happily established and honoured in the observance, the Mayoress will place a floral tribute in honour of Sister Dora on the Statute on The Bridge at 11 o'clock in the morning of that day.

The noble and self-sacrificing labours of Sister Dora at the Walsall General Hospital from 1865-78 in the cause of the sick and suffering endeared her to the hearts of Walsall people, and adorned with signal honour the nursing profession.

Many will again welcome the opportunity of paying homage to her memory.

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