

The General Nursing Council for England and Wales.

A MEETING OF THE General Nursing Council for England and Wales was held at the Offices of the Council, 23, Portland Place, London, W., on September 26th.

Election of Chairman.

Mr. J. Diamond, appointed by the Privy Council, took the Chair for the election of Chairman. He announced that as there was only one nomination, Miss D. M. Smith was unanimously re-elected as Chairman of Council for the next year.

Professor James Willis was welcomed as a Member of Council, appointed by order of the Privy Council.

Death of Mr. H. M. Walton, M.A.

The Chairman announced, with regret, the death of Mr. H. M. Walton, Member of Council appointed by the Minister of Health, who held office from 1942-46, and served as Chairman of the Finance Committee.

Election of Vice-Chairman.

Two nominations were received for the office of Vice-Chairman. An election was held and Miss M. J. Smyth received 20 votes and Miss J. M. Calder received 8 votes. Miss Smyth was therefore re-elected as Vice-Chairman of Council for the ensuing year.

Pioneers in the Art of Healing.

1.—Florence Nightingale.

Mr. David Gunnston has sent us, for publication, the story of six pioneers in the Art of Healing.

PERHAPS MORE THAN ANY OTHER figure of the past who is associated with pioneer work in the art of healing and care of the sick, Florence Nightingale, "The Lady of the Lamp," has caught public fancy and achieved mortal fame and respect.

Right from her early childhood Florence Nightingale was devoted to the service of the sick and after persuading her parents went abroad at the age of 21 to study nursing methods, visiting institutions and hospitals, such as they then were, all over Europe. Returning to England she spent ten years in a concentrated study of every aspect of nursing. At the end of this period she felt herself more competent to put her knowledge into practice and accordingly offered her services to the Government of the day as a volunteer to go out to help relieve conditions among the wounded soldiers engaged in the newly started Crimean War.

She was accompanied by a number of similarly-minded women when she set out on the wearisome journey to Russia, and from the moment of her arrival there threw all her energies into alleviating the appalling suffering under which these hapless men were living. She laboured unceasingly for two years, working amid conditions of indescribable filth, of complete lack of sanitary arrangements, and perhaps worst of all, of official ignorance and apathy. She did achieve a tremendous amount of improvement in spite of the continuous flow of fresh casualties and the dangers of disease.

It was her practice of walking round the wards of the camp-hospitals at night with an oil lamp in her hand comforting and tending the wounded men that earned her the well-known title of "The Lady of the Lamp." We shall never know just how many poor men she succoured in those dark days, but we do know that they appreciated her work to the full.

Not until the last British soldier had been evacuated from the Crimea in 1856 did she herself leave, but as fate would have it, her own health had broken down under the strain. She returned to England and remained an invalid for the rest of her days.

But even that did not quench her spirit of service to others. She began to write. Many reports, pamphlets and the like

flowed from her pen, drawing public attention to the widespread improvements needed in medical and nursing treatment at that time. Her book "Notes on Nursing" was at one time found in every Victorian home.

It seems hard to believe that when she started her work there was no organised nursing service in Britain, much of the work being left to such wickedly incompetent characters as portrayed by Dickens in *Sairey Gamp*. The example she set imparted a new significance to the care of the sick.

2.—Röntgen

AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE EARNED a place in the noble line of those who have made medical history, the name of Wilhelm Konrad von Röntgen is perhaps among the less familiar, yet his claim to such recognition is of the first rank, for to him goes the credit of discovering X-rays.

Educated in Holland and Switzerland, Röntgen, a German, set out to become a physicist and after teaching physics and allied subjects at various places secured a professorship at Wurzburg University, Bavaria, the scene of his great discovery.

Like so many discoveries of far-reaching effect for mankind this one was made quite by accident. It was in 1895, while experimenting one day on the conduction of electricity through gases in a vacuum tube that Röntgen suddenly noticed a glowing fluorescence of a tube of certain chemicals which happened to be lying near although screened by black paper. Further investigation showed that this radiation given off by the electrical apparatus had the power of passing through opaque substances which was absent in ordinary light. The scientist was not slow to follow up this strange discovery and subsequently found that the radiation worked the same on a photographic plate.

He decided that certain invisible rays, allied to light rays yet different therefrom, were the cause, and tried to ascertain their true nature. It was thus, when he was unaware of their exact nature and "for the sake of brevity" that he named them X-rays, and they have been called the same ever since. Although other scientists had been working on nearly the same idea many years before to Röntgen goes the credit for the discovery and for the immediate development of it to useful purposes.

The value of these rays in medicine was quickly realised and although it took many years to bring the application of the use of X-rays to the perfection we know today, it is to the credit of Röntgen and his later successors that they were used almost at once to good advantage.

Four days after the discovery was known in America, for instance, X-rays were successfully used to locate a bullet buried in a man's calf. The chief advantage of the use of the rays was that they could be used on a fluorescent screen to be observed right away, or to take a permanent photograph.

Very soon, reports began to flow in from all over the world of the great value the discovery was proving. In Paris X-rays were used to diagnose a diseased thighbone; in Berlin the growth of new bone after a fracture was watched and studied.

By 1896 the rays were in general use, even though the average exposure for an X-ray plate was about 20 minutes compared with the fraction of a second today. Most noticeable among the earliest success was with broken bones, embedded foreign bodies and so on. Then came the wonderful use for T.B. and cancer and later in dentistry. Then followed the uses of X-rays as healing agents in certain diseases as well as for diagnosis and observation.

Honours and fame showered on Röntgen for his great discovery from every quarter. Among others he was awarded the Rumford Medal of the Royal Society in 1896 and the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1901. He died in Munich in 1923 at the age of 78, just too early to see his discovery brought to full fruition as it is today with miniature mass

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