

Pre-Nursing Education Centre in Sheffield.

By Irene Wyatt.

THE LOSS OF GIRLS to the nursing profession between the ages of 15 and 18 has for some time been a matter of grave concern to those responsible for the staffing of hospitals. It may be that these girls cannot afford to wait several years before beginning their training or that, having taken temporary posts, they are not prepared to accept a considerable decrease in salary to undertake training for nursing.

In an attempt to solve this problem pre-nursing courses attached to Grammar Schools, Technical Schools and Evening Institutes were begun with varying degrees of success but the number of girls attending these courses was comparatively small, often owing to difficulties of staffing, organisation and accommodation.

In order to bridge the gap between these years and to increase the recruitment into the nursing profession, several authorities have now instituted schemes which are much more thorough in aim and wider in scope.

In Sheffield the Education Committee and the Board of Governors of the United Sheffield Hospitals came to a friendly and successful arrangement to establish a school for pre-nursing education. A building was purchased by the Board of Governors of the hospitals. This was then rented, equipped and staffed by the Education Committee, and became the Pre-Nursing Education Centre for Sheffield.

Although the advertisements of this scheme have been mainly local, applications have come from girls living as far apart as the Scilly Isles and Northern Ireland. Because of this the establishment of a hostel by the hospital authorities has been found necessary.

The girls called for interview are those who have passed the examination for the General Certificate of Education with reasonable success, or those who have passed a test in General Ability and have written a satisfactory essay. Recommendations from the heads of the schools which the candidates attend are also taken into consideration. Students are then selected by the matrons of the United Sheffield Hospitals, the Principal of the School of Nursing and the Principal of the Pre-Nursing Education Centre. Girls enter the scheme at the ages of 15, 16 or 17. The 15-year-old entrants are mainly from the "A" streams of the Secondary Modern schools and the majority of 16 and 17-year-old entrants are drawn from the Grammar Schools and have taken the General Certificate of Education. There are, of course, a few girls who come from technical and private schools but these are the exception.

Following this plan the Secondary Modern girls have three years in which to continue their general education and to reach a sufficiently high academic standard to take Part I of the Preliminary Nursing Examination before leaving.

The 15-year-old students spend one day each week at one of the hospitals and four days at the Centre; the United Sheffield Hospitals provide these girls with a training allowance of £52 per annum. The 16-year-olds receive £78 per annum and spend three days in the Centre and two days in the hospitals. In the last year only two days are spent at the Centre and three and a half days at the hospitals. The allowance for these students is £150 per annum.

The work taken in the Centre covers a very wide range as no scheme of education is satisfactory if only vocational; therefore much time is spent on both written and oral English and a great deal of use is made of the reference and lending sections of the local library and the new library in the Centre.

No professional subjects are taken until the girls reach the age of 16, although even with 15-year-olds a great deal of the work has some bearing on the later syllabus. In teaching arithmetic, for instance, a high standard of accuracy is required in preparation

for any calculations which may be necessary in connection with medicines. The older students are particularly interested in applied mathematics which is taken with special reference to the human body.

In the first two years Biology is taught in order to give a background for Anatomy and Physiology and to stress the place of man in the whole scheme of living creatures.

In General Science the principles of electricity are taught and work on heat, light, sound, the atmosphere, water and numerous other topics is correlated with the



A Communal Health Class Examination
Students 17 years old.

work in Communal Health.

The Social Studies give a picture of the scope of both Central and Local Governments, particularly as applied to the National Health Scheme, and the study of the aid given to the more unfortunate members of the community lays a good foundation for those who may later wish to become health visitors or district nurses.

The more recreational subjects are Handicrafts, Needlework, Domestic Science and Physical Training, but the handicrafts will be of great service in occupational therapy and with regard to domestic science there is no doubt of the importance of dietetics in the training of future nurses.

Anatomy, Physiology and Communal Health are the subjects taken in preparation for Part I of the Preliminary Examination, and in the second and third years of the course a large proportion of the school time is devoted to these subjects.

From the point of view of the staff of the Centre the work has been an interesting experiment. In June, 1955, the first group of students to have completed the recognised course took Part I of the Preliminary Examination. Of these girls 16 were from Grammar Schools and 17 from Secondary Modern Schools. All were successful. The ultimate success of the course however cannot be estimated except by the staffs of the United Sheffield Hospitals' School of Nursing. They will be able to judge whether this new venture has been

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