

It is this narrow exclusiveness which has been so great an obstacle to the progress of the R.B.N.A. However each year its members are proving the truth that in union is strength; and the kindness and sympathy which its meetings have engendered amongst the members who have thus had the benefit of personal intercourse, prompted the able letter, printed in our issue of last week, from Miss ISLA STEWART.

### Matrons in Council.

*Is the formation of a Matrons' Council desirable? and, if so, what should be its programme of work?*



MADAM,—Allow me to add my quota to the discussion now going on in the *NURSING RECORD* as to the desirability—the *pros.* and *cons.*—of the formation of a Matron's Council. Miss Stewart's views, as expressed in the last issue, are suggestive, and very much to the point.

But I would like to base the movement on more progressive and broader lines than has yet been proposed. A Matron's Council would be excellent, and, doubtless, might be the means of solving many difficulties, by affording an opportunity for discussing the best methods of training and internal management to be adopted in Hospitals and Institutions. But, in view of the manifold developments of the Nursing science, it is evident that the Council would form a limited, and, by no means, a fair representation of Nurses, whose interests stand in need of protection. The ground to be covered is large and wide. It appears to me that the formation of a Nurses' Debating Society, in connection with the R.B.N.A., would be a more far reaching power, and one that would embody the interests of every class of Nurse. It should be so arranged that periodic meetings, fortnightly or otherwise, as might be later determined, should take place, that the subjects for discussion should be submitted, balloted for, and decided by a majority. That the chosen subject should be introduced, opposed, and freely discussed from the varied points of view of every department of the Nursing world. In this way, we should fairly take in all branches of the profession; we should rightly interpret the feelings and needs of Nurses as a body, and should establish a standing parliament to subserve the best interests of the profession. The Matron, the Private, District, and Ward Nurses; the Hospital Sister; the Nurse lecturer would thus meet on common ground as fellow-workers, and these allied interests would form a very powerful body. It is only by the strength of Union that we can develop, assert, and maintain our professional needs and privileges; and it is only by acting in sympathetic concert that

we can attain to the Utopian goal, the "greatest good of the greatest number." And I would go even further than this. "Narrowing down" is the fault of many organisations; and the reproach that is so constantly cast at Associations of women is that they run into cliques and exclusive grooves. Out of the needs of the times there is arising a great demand for knowledge of a hygienic kind, and many Nurses have found a congenial work and a fair field of labour in undertaking lectureships in Nursing, First aid and public health. We also see a new development in the appointments that have been and will be made of women as Sanitary Inspectors, Inspectors of Factories, workers under the Shop Hours' Act, and, probably, in the near future, as Workhouse Inspectors. I think it would be a great advantage to us, as a body, and would serve much to enlarge our views if we were to invite the ladies holding these public appointments into our ranks. It may, of course, be necessary to limit our membership to those who belong to the R.B.N.A.; but, according to the custom of Debating Societies in general, we could have open meetings for the discussion of Health and Sanitary matters, which should be infinitely interesting and valuable to Hospital workers. By some such scheme, it seems to me that we should steer clear of becoming too "shoppy," and that we should derive benefit from occasionally taking wider ground than is bounded by four ward walls. A matrons' Council is too circumscribed and one-sided; it would be like having an organization of Capital alone with no Labour representation. The Debating Society would provide the necessary technical instruction in parliamentary procedure, which I agree with Miss Stewart is very important. We should have to conduct our debates on strictly constitutional lines, and I feel sure the scheme would prove most popular. At first, we might have sparsely occupied seats, we should have dumb members and shy; but time and use would overcome these, and the member "unaccustomed to public speaking" would first break the ice by proposing a vote of thanks, would then go on to supporting an amendment, and might finally become so eloquent that we should be glad to fall back upon a bye-law which would entitle us to cry, "Time!" Individually, I believe the art of speaking is woman's special talent, and that it only needs a small amount of encouragement to draw out great possibilities in this direction, and this, I think, the Debating Society would do. Miss Stewart, in her admirable letter says, "Hitherto, Matrons have been isolated beings, having no wish to know what other Matrons do or think," and she rightly concludes that the formation of the Council would be a bond of union. But it seems to me that if the Council be limited to Matrons alone, although the isolation of the individual will be lessened, it would tend to increase their isolation as a class from the great body of the Nurses, and this would not be a desirable end. In conclusion, I would suggest that a representative meeting be called to discuss the matter, and to find out what the feeling of

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