

Royal British Nurses' Association.

(Incorporated by Royal Charter.)



A MEETING of the Executive Committee was held at the offices, 17, Old Cavendish Street, W., on Friday, April 5th, at 5 p.m.

The Nurse Hon. Secretary last week paid a visit to Birmingham to confer with the leading Matrons of the midland capital, concerning the formation of a local centre. She was most kindly received, and a most suggestive scheme for the organisation of the local centre has been drawn up, of which we hope to give further details at a later date. It is hoped that a public meeting will be held in Birmingham towards the end of May, when a deputation from the Royal British Nurses' Association will be present to explain its objects.

Mrs. Annie Edwards, another early member, has been appointed Matron of the Metropolitan Convalescent Institution at Walton-on-Thames. Mrs. Edwards was trained at University College Hospital, and worked in connection with this hospital from 1881 to 1894. She was registered in 1890, and has proved during temporary charge of the Institution that she possesses the necessary qualifications for the responsible post to which she has been appointed.

Miss Annie Price has resigned her position as Lady Superintendent of the Warneford Hospital, Leamington, after seven years' superintendence, upon her approaching marriage, and has been presented by the Committee with a silver tea and coffee service, and a handsome silver salver.

We have this week received letters from Australia and South Africa, from Matron members of the Royal British Nurses' Association, in which they write in most hopeful terms concerning the progress of Nursing organization in these colonies, and the growing appreciation of the work of our Association. No sign is more hopeful for the future welfare of our profession than the fact that the Matrons of training schools all over the world are awakening to a keen sense of their public duty, and are throwing themselves energetically into the work of organisation. We may rest assured that under such circumstances the Uniform Curriculum of Nursing Education will soon be evolved.

The General Council Meeting will take place at 17, Old Cavendish Street, W., on Friday, April 19th, at 5 p.m. The last Sessional Meeting will be held at 8 p.m. on the same date, when Miss Annesley Kenealy will be the lecturer. Admittance free to members, 1s. to non-members.

It does not appear to be generally known amongst the members that the Nurses' Club Room is open daily from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., and that tea and light refreshments can be obtained there. Those living far from the West End, or coming up to town from a distance, will find it a most central and convenient rendezvous.

Papers and information concerning the work of the Association can be obtained by application to the Secretary.

The Red Cross Society.

In the old world we read of armies ruthlessly vanquished almost to extinction. Mercy and pity were unknown. The motto "Peace and goodwill to all men" was only flashed into the world with the dawn of Christianity. But nineteen centuries have passed away, and that lesson has not yet been learnt. The twentieth century may see its accomplishment, and there is little doubt that the Red Cross Societies will be found to have formed a strong element in bringing it about. Even in the great Napoleonic wars, when Europe from end to end was strewn with carnage, we hear nothing of organised Army Nursing. The horrors of the Crimea first awakened the conscience of Europe; then followed, in 1859, the Franco-Austrian war ending in the Battle of Solferino, which, lasting some fifteen hours, resulted in 42,000 killed and wounded. The lack of sufficient organised relief was bitterly felt, and this utter inadequacy of means of succour sank into the hearts of many of those forced to be eye-witnesses.

One of these, M. Henry Dunant, published soon after, "Un Souvenir de Solferino," in which he conceived the idea of there being formed in each country a permanent society for the relief of the wounded in battle, to act primarily for its own people, but in a spirit of universal humanity. The book, as well it might, created a great sensation, and resulted in the great Conference of Geneva, 1863, to which were invited official representatives from every European power. Throughout the four days a code of international enactments was discussed, the main recommendations of which were the formation in each country of a committee to co-operate with the army sanitary service; that such committee should occupy itself in peace with preparing hospital stores, training volunteer nurses, &c. The Conference discussed the neutrality of hospitals, of its *personnel*, and of the wounded, and also the necessity of a uniform and badge.

In August, 1864, the representatives of sixteen States assembled in Geneva, and a treaty was drawn up embodying, with some few alterations, the proposal of the previous year. Thus, without fuss, without the flourish of trumpets, was initiated one of the grandest institutions of modern times. So quiet, indeed, was its inception, that even in the *Times* newspaper there is only the faintest echo of its deliberations, merely a few lines, hidden away in a corner. Yet now the Red Cross on the white background is understood and appreciated in every country in the civilized world; the building surmounted by this ensign is inviolable; he or she who wears it is regarded as sacred.

Unfortunately, however, the various governments have not urged the necessity of the body embodying the principles urged at the great Geneva Congress, calling itself the French, English, or German Red Cross Society. Thus some confusion has arisen in the minds of the public, especially in England.

The fitness of so noble a work being carried out under the symbol of the Christian religion is obvious to all. There is also a lesser fitness. It is the national sign, though colours reversed, of Switzerland, which had the honour of entertaining the great Congress of 1864; also, Switzerland, as is well known, is a neutral State, and supports no army.

It is no paradox to say that under the Red Cross, though the bitterest wars may be raging, the whole world is at peace. The Angel of Mercy knows neither nationality nor creed: pain and anguish are the only passports to her sympathy. Surely we may see in this the forecast of a time when Liberty, Equality and Fraternity will be an international, not merely a national watchword.

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[previous page](#)

[next page](#)