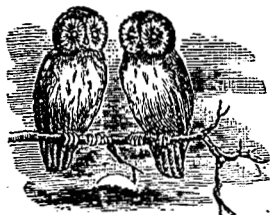


The Matrons' Council.



THE Quarterly Meeting of the Matrons' Council was held on Thursday, the 23rd inst., at the Matron's House, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, at 3 p.m., when a very satisfactory Report was presented from the Executive Committee.

Courteous letters of acceptance of Hon. Membership of the Council were read from Mrs. Hunter Robb, Miss Louise Darche, and Miss L. L. Dock, all expressive of that kindly professional and sisterly feeling which distinguishes our American colleagues.

The resignation of Mrs. Dacre Craven was received and accepted. The resignation of Mrs. Lancelot Andrews as Hon. Secretary to the Council, owing to her recent great bereavement, was received with very sincere regret, and a warm vote of thanks for her past services to the Council was passed unanimously and directed to be conveyed to her. Mrs. Andrews continues her connection with the Council as an Associate, and it is to be hoped that in the future her valuable help and advice will again be available.

Mrs. Gray (late Matron Chalmers Hospital, Edinburgh) consented to fill the office of Hon. Secretary until the next meeting of the Council.

Interesting discussions took place on various matters of professional importance to Nurses, and were referred to a Sub-Committee for further consideration.

The meeting then adjourned.

THE CONFERENCE.

At the Quarterly Conference of the Matrons' Council held on Thursday evening, the 23rd inst., at the Medical Society's Rooms, Chandos Street, W., Dr. Bedford Fenwick gave an address on the Prospects and Principles of Legislation for Nurses.

Miss ISLA STEWART took the chair, and in opening the meeting, said that it was hardly necessary to introduce Dr. Bedford Fenwick, as his interest in Nurses, and the immense trouble he had taken in helping them in their work and the organisation of their profession, was so well known.

Dr. BEDFORD FENWICK said that it afforded him great pleasure to accede to the invitation from so representative a body as the Matrons' Council, to address them on a question in which he had for many years been much interested, and one which was of such great importance to the public, the medical profession, and the Nurses themselves.

He briefly pointed out that for many years it had been found necessary for all professional bodies to organise, for their own and the public welfare. It was necessary for skilled workers, in order to distinguish themselves from quacks, to establish some sort of authoritative list or Register, upon which those who were really qualified to follow their calling might be enrolled, so that the public, or those desiring such services, might be able to distinguish between the skilled worker and the quack. In considering the question of Nursing legislation, it was necessary to briefly recall the history of Medical Registration. It was only after 1815, and perhaps not really until 1828 that medical men began to bestir themselves in the direction of demanding some such system for their

profession. And, although the evidence of its value which was produced was irrefutable, the progress of educating the public and the profession was so slow that it took nearly thirty years before Parliament was persuaded to pass the first Medical Act in 1858.

Nurses sometimes expressed themselves disheartened with the fact that Nursing reform had been in the air for eight years, and that progress seemed to be so slow. But they must remember, to their comfort, that medical men took thirty years to obtain *their* Bill, and that events were moving towards that end much more rapidly in the Nursing world.

In the last few years, systems of Registration had become more general, because its public benefit was more plainly observed. The Army had its official List. The Clergy had their official List. The Royal Charter of the Royal British Nurses' Association had given State recognition to a List of Nurses, and one great Colony had passed an Act making the Registration of Nurses compulsory throughout its territories. Nurses, then, were asking for no new thing: they were only asking to have extended to them a privilege which Parliament has for many years accorded to other professions.

What did the desired Legislation mean? That Parliament should create a professional body authorised to determine the standard of education and training that Nurses must pass through to qualify them to carry out efficiently their most responsible duties, and possessing powers to purge the Register of Nurses of those who showed themselves unworthy to remain as recognised members of an honourable calling. The first step which such a Bill would probably take would be to form a Council, probably much on the lines of the General Medical Council. This Council would have definite powers of Registration, and would decide matters of discipline connected with the profession.

Now as to the prospects of Legislation. It would be remembered that the first attempt to bring about the Registration of Nurses was made in 1888. In 1890 the first Register of Nurses was commenced, and in that year Dr. Fenwick proposed a Resolution at the Annual Meeting of the British Medical Association in order to elicit the opinion of the medical profession on the question. Rather to his surprise he found a seconder, and some dozen or so others who were present showed themselves in favour of it. But there was so much feeling evinced against the proposal, that he was strongly advised to withdraw his Resolution, and did so.

In August, 1895, he proposed the following Resolution approving of the principle of Registration at the Annual Meeting of the same Association, and this time it was unanimously carried:—

"That in the opinion of this meeting it is expedient that an Act of Parliament should, as soon as possible, be passed providing for the registration and education of medical, surgical, and obstetric Nurses; and the Council of this Association are therefore requested to consider this matter, and to take such measures as may seem to them advisable to obtain such legislation."

There were other facts also from which it appeared that the prospects of Nursing Legislation were very good, and he had little hesitation in saying that Nurses would, before the end of this century, have obtained the legislation they so greatly need. It was manifestly unfair that the trained Nurse should occupy in the

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