

The International Congress of Nurses.

AFTERNOON SESSION,

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18th, 1901.

NURSES' CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES DISCUSSION.

Miss Isabel McIsaac, President, requested Miss Amy Hughes to speak on Nurses' Co-operative Societies in England.

MISS AMY HUGHES: "I am asked to say a few words upon the subject of Nurses' Co-operative Societies. Until last June I had the privilege of being in charge of a very large association of private nurses working on the same lines as the one of which you have just heard. The principle of co-operation amongst private nurses has proved so successful that it is becoming very general with us. Not only do the nurses secure the full fees for their services, but by each one contributing a fixed percentage towards working expenses, the business of placing them in communication with doctors, helping to enforce the payment of their fees for services rendered, &c., is carried on without delay and loss of time to the nurse concerned. The office becomes the calling place of doctors and patients' friends, and many difficulties can be cleared away and things made easier on both sides by this common ground of meeting. I would plead that those who join such societies should try to eliminate the feeling that the work is only undertaken because of the higher remuneration it secures, and because of the greater freedom of the life. Private nurses represent the profession to the general public, and if they lower the standard it re-acts unfavourably on us all. It rests with each individual woman to create and maintain a favourable impression or the reverse in every household she enters. Selfishness or want of tact in a very small degree create a wider distrust and prejudice than the nurse ever realises. The associations exist for the benefit of all, and on each one rests the responsibility of not only making a good record for herself, but also for her Association, and thus, in a very direct manner for her fellow nurses working in that Society, and in addition for the nursing world at large.

The private nurse of all others can least afford to work in an isolated way, for herself alone, her responsibility to the whole community is too great, and it is almost impossible for her to keep a keen professional interest in her work unless she is in touch with nursing interests."

MISS RIDDLE (delegate of the Boston Nurses' Club): "The last speaker speaks of keeping up the interest in the work. We know that we do a great deal in that way by our Alumnae Associations, but our Alumnae Association members, individual members, do not have the stimulus that is gained by attendance at one of these conventions. It takes a long time if you can only send four Delegates to one annual convention to give each a turn. In Boston we have organized a Boston Nurses' Club, which is maintained and supported entirely by the nurses, which has a central registrar, and which endeavours to maintain interest in nursing subjects by a series of lectures upon various subjects given all through the winter season. In this way the

interest is maintained, we have outlined a course of study for the coming winter and a series of lectures which we hope will do for us just what has been mentioned by Miss Hughes, the last speaker."

MISS ISLA STEWART: "I am very much struck with the amount of work you do in your Alumnae Associations. Indeed, they appear to be formed for this more than for merely giving pleasure to the members. The League of St. Bartholomew's Hospital Nurses was instituted more on social lines than any of the associations I have heard of in this country. We merely do what business is necessary, and give the social side as much prominence as possible. I am a profound believer in the developing effect of pleasure in a busy life. There is nothing makes a nurse do her work with such "snap" as having a "real good time" at not too frequently recurring intervals. We have only one business meeting, which takes place about the end of June, and another meeting in December, which is wholly social. The members take great pride in the association, and have much pleasure in the meetings; indeed, no amusement is provided. Music is almost unheard, and certainly unattended to in the noise of many tongues as one friend meets and greets another. I fear you would think us a terribly frivolous community. We issue a paper twice yearly. It is entirely devoted to the doings of past and present nurses of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and of all who are connected with it in any way. There is an editorial on some popular topic, some letters from nurses in foreign lands, notices of appointments may members may have obtained, notice of births, marriages, and deaths. The bi-annual examinations are recorded, and at the end a full list of members, with their present addresses."

Miss Isabel McIsaac, President, in closing the meeting, assured the foreign delegates "that, indeed, we Americans can be frivolous, too; but we have taken the organization of our profession very seriously."

Summary of the Session on Nurses' Co-operative Societies.

In England we are apt to term co-operative societies of nurses those which associate only for commercial purposes—such as the Nurses' Co-operation of Private Nurses or the Registered Nurses' Society—but this is not strictly correct, and there are many classes of nurses associated for other purposes than financial gain. Take, for instance, the League of Bart's nurses, the Social Club at Guy's, the Dublin Nurses' Club, and many others, the objects of which are for mutual help and social intercourse, and which do untold good in bringing nurses together in a sisterly spirit to work and play.

On this side the unobservant insular squatter who gathers his opinions—which he expresses dogmatically, from ill-informed gossip, and the hasty globe-trotter's pamphlet—is apt to poo-hoo the American woman as altogether frivolous and unstable. Such an estimation is radically

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