

## Nursing in Holland.

(From Our Special Correspondent.)

### THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE DUTCH NURSING ASSOCIATION.

The Dutch Nursing Association has lately held its ninth annual general meeting at Utrecht. In his opening speech, the chairman, Dr. A. Couvée, Medical Superintendent of the Jewish Hospital and Lunatic Asylum at Amsterdam, referred to the fact that in very, very old times the sick were protected against indiscreet revelations about their persons and surroundings on the part of their physician, who was bound upon oath, sworn to Apollo, Asclepios, Hygieia, and Panakeia, never to betray anything that he should see or hear with regard to his patients in practising his art, considering all such things as inviolable secrets. As it was twenty-three centuries ago so it is at present. The medical oath has maintained itself in the course of time, only more or less modified by religious insights and convictions. How ever much different opinions on this subject may diverge, the main point has never been assailed; that it is the solemn duty of the physician to keep the professional secret.

But never as yet—at least in our country—has a nurse been bound to promise, before receiving her certificate for sick nursing, that she will keep as an holy secret anything that comes as such to her knowledge in her professional life.

And yet it is a matter of fact that the nurse, often still more than the medical man, is the person most especially honoured with the confidence of her patients. This communicativeness is often increased by the psychological emotion or depression of the sick one and his surroundings. Those personal confidences, however, are not the only subjects which should never be talked about by the nurse. There are many other things that require the strictest silence, such as the symptoms of the disease, the nature of the medicaments, etc. The seemingly most harmless allusion may reveal a secret that ought to be kept inviolable.

There are undoubtedly nurses who, by the firmness and greatness of their individual character, will never betray any professional secret. But do we find with *all* nurses that high and noble conception of professional duty? Alas, it is a sad truth that many of them are lacking in the tact and delicacy necessary to prevent them from talking of previous cases, in spite of all the rules of nursing ethics, in spite of all the warnings and exhortations from their teachers in the training school, so often repeated, and as often unheard or forgotten. Therefore the chairman felt very happy to report to the meeting the pleasing news that some progress has been made in this matter, and a step taken in the right direction.

The Amsterdam section of the Association, "The White Cross," has revised its rules and by-laws, and in its new regulation inserted the following regulation, that any nurse, to whom after a well-passed examination the certificate for sick-nursing is granted by the above mentioned association, is bound to vow, before receiving her diploma, to keep as a sacred secret all things that come as such to her knowledge in her professional life. A legal penalty cannot be enforced for the breaking of this vow. It is only a matter of trust and honour, but a vow, made under these circumstances, and at such a moment, will most probably prove to be of great support to those of weaker natures, who have not firmness of character and mind enough to respect another's secrets.

The chairman ended his speech by expressing his fervent wish, that a not too far off future may bring us State Registration for nurses.

After this he gave place to Lady de Bosch Kemper, Hon. Secretary and Treasurer, who alluded to the fact that this meeting ought to be considered as a remarkable event in the history of the *Bond* (Dutch Association for Sick-nursing).

In this assembly the rules and by-laws of the *Bond* were to be totally changed. Henceforth the *Bond* will be divided in different local sections, spread over the whole country. Each section will have its own committee of management, and the central force that unites them all into one common bond will be the Head Committee of Management.

The membership of the Dutch Association for Sick-nursing will now be open to (a) medical men; (b) medical superintendents and Matrons of hospitals; (c) members of the boards of management of hospitals or associations for sick-nursing; (d) male and female nurses in the possession of a certificate registered by the "Bond"; and (e) persons who have rendered great services to the cause of sick-nursing. Thus membership will be extended to *all* those who feel interest in this noble and blessed work. The membership of the "Bond" ought not to be dependent upon any examination or any certificate. Lay men and lay women, inspired with a warm sympathy for this branch of social work, ought to have the opportunity of becoming more acquainted with all questions concerning the nursing of the sick. The nearer the tie is that binds many lay men and lay women to "the Bond," the more easily will be realised many good and useful projects, such as the founding of Homes for Nurses, Sanatoria for male and female Nurses, pension funds, etc., all things in which the financial factor plays a large part. Union is strength. Co-operation is the way, by which the cause of sick-nursing can be furthered in this direction.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)