

## Letter from Holland.

## DUTCH ASSOCIATION FOR SICK NURSING.



An old acquaintance of our English sisters, the Dutch Association for Sick Nursing, shortly called the "Bond," has recently held its tenth general meeting at The Hague. This meeting deserves our special attention from the fact that it was the first general assembly of the Bond after its re-organisation. To refresh the memory of some of my readers, I shall recall in a few words that the Bond is now divided in sections, spread over our whole country—Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam, Utrecht, Groningen, Haarlem, Arnhem, Middelburg, Zwolle, Alkmaar, Bloemendaal, Den Helder, Friesland, Zutphen, Edam. The formerly existing difference between members and donators has been extinguished; the membership of the Bond is now open to *all* persons who feel interest and sympathy for sick nursing. This large conception is only restricted by the law of the ballot, by which means unworthy and unwished-for elements are excluded. With regard to this, we must not forget that the Bond is not a trade union, specially and exclusively for male and female nurses. According to its statutes, "the Dutch Association for Sick Nursing aims at furthering the nursing of the sick, in the largest sense of the word, in the Netherlands and their colonies," and therefore it was thought desirable that interesting "outsiders" should also be admitted as members.

After this short explanation, I return to the general meeting at the Hague.

Dr. A. Couvée, Medical Superintendent of the Jewish Hospital and Lunatic Asylum at Amsterdam, presided. In his opening speech he made some remarks about the training of nurses, deeply regretting the fact that there is as yet no uniformity in the methods of training. Education of the will is, in this, a most prominent factor. An efficiently trained nurse knows and feels what she ought to do or not. She knows how to decide and to act, not by blind obedience, but by her own independent judgment. She has by her training not only gathered a more or less superficial knowledge of anatomy, physiology, hygiene, &c.—and surely she cannot do without that knowledge—but the necessity of concentrating her whole attention upon her patient is strongly impressed upon her. As a matter of course, the nurse, from her part, has the most righteous claims on a due quantity of rest, recreation, good feeding, &c., in order to keep her body healthy and her will and energy strong.

After this, Dr. B. J. Kouwer, Professor at the University of Utrecht, delivered a splendid lecture on "The Future of the Private Nurse," in which he developed the idea of a kind of post-graduate course for sisters in private and district nursing in this way: that they should work once a year, for two months, in a not too small hospital. He thought this not only a

more desirable opportunity to refresh their already acquired knowledge, but by this regulation they would also learn the newest inventions and methods in the line of sick-nursing, and broaden their insight. A private nurse who has never nursed a diphtheria case must be placed, if possible, in a diphtheria ward; a nurse especially trained in the care of internal cases should be set at work in a surgical or an obstetric ward. A sister who feels herself a stranger in the dominion of ophthalmic nursing may complete her practical knowledge in an ophthalmic hospital; a nurse who only knows the outside of a lunatic asylum may practise herself in the care of mental cases, &c. A committee of two or three persons should be appointed to meet with the applications of the private nurses, the mentioning of their special wishes, and the time at which they should be disposable for eight weeks. This committee should be in a permanent connection with the different hospitals in our country, in order to regulate the distribution. Professor Kouwer thought this also an excellent means to secure to the hospital nurses a yearly holiday-time of at least a month. He did not deny that, with the present state of things, a large number of difficulties would arise with the realisation of his project, but they are by no means insurmountable, and, therefore, he proposed that the Board of Management should charge the different Sections of the Bond with the consideration of the possible practicability of this project. The results of their inquiries should be sent in six months to the Board of Management or to a committee specially assigned with the duty of selection. The discourse of Professor Kouwer was met with warm applause.

From the report, read by the Hon. Secretary and Treasurer, Lady De Bosch Kemper, the assembly learned the most joyous fact of the increasing prosperity of the Bond and the principal performances of the different Sections.

Of the proposals offered by the different Sections, I shall only mention those which I think of any interest for the readers of this journal.

The proposal of the Utrecht Section, that the Board of Management should try to bring forth a co-operation between all the societies that send out male and female nurses in private nursing, was accepted unanimously. As yet there is no bond whatever between the above-mentioned associations. Yet it is an undeniable fact that they might aid and support each other in many respects. In cases of a momentary need of nurses, they might assist each other in their own interest and in that of suffering mankind. A uniform set of fees is also thought most desirable.

The Bloemendaal Section brought forward the following proposal:—

"That the Board of Management be charged by the general meeting with the task of furthering the publishing of a Guide for Sick Nursing for the Netherlands. The Guide for Sick Nursing at Amsterdam, published by the Board of Guardians of the Section Amsterdam and Environs of the Bond, proves to be a most practical mentor for all those who need counsel and information on sick nursing. A Guide of the same kind, not only for the greater cities, but also for the smaller ones and for the country, will meet a strongly-felt want, and further the speedy giving of aid where needed."

After some discussion the proposal was accepted.

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