

## The Select Committee on Nursing.

On Tuesday, July 26th, on the conclusion of Miss Hobbs's re-examination, Miss AMY HUGHES was called, and said that for the last two and a-half years she had been Superintendent of County Nursing Associations in connection with the Queen's Jubilee Institute. She was trained at St. Thomas's Hospital for sixteen months, and was then passed on to the Metropolitan and National Nursing Association, by which reports were furnished to the hospital, so that she might receive her certificate at the end of her term of service. She had subsequently held District Nursing appointments at Kensington, Chelsea, and Westminster, and had been Superintendent of Nurses at the Bolton Union Workhouse Hospital, for two, and Lady Superintendent of the Nurses' Co-operation, New Cavendish Street, for four years.

Miss Hughes then made a statement in the course of which she expressed herself very strongly in favour of a system of State Examination and Registration of Nurses. She said that at present no standard exists by which the value of certificates can be estimated. She then proceeded to give statistics as to the length of training in various London and provincial hospitals showing that considerable divergence existed.

In some, after training for from one year to eighteen months, the nurses were sent private nursing, while in others three years' training in hospital wards was the rule. There was thus, owing to the great variety of experience, a great difference in the value of certificates.

It was extremely difficult, both for the public and for medical men, to estimate the value of a nurse's training under present conditions. Amongst other instances, Miss Hughes gave one of a cottage hospital of ten beds and two cots which gave a certificate at the end of two years.

Members of the medical profession were educated in all parts of the United Kingdom. How was a medical man educated in Scotland, who settled down to private practice in England, to estimate the value of a certificate of a nurse trained, say, at Dewsbury or Tunbridge Wells? How could he differentiate?

The same difficulty was experienced by the large Associations employing nurses, such as the Colonial Nursing Association, and the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute. Nurses were employed holding certificates from all parts of the kingdom, and it was only because the Committees possessed expert members that they were able to gauge the value of the various certificates presented. As, according to a recent legal decision, Committees employing nurses were not responsible for their actions, some definition of efficiency was most desirable. At present, knowledge of a nurse's shortcomings was gained in private practice by the public and medical practitioners at the expense of the patients. When she made mistakes the medical attendant discovered her deficiencies.

In regard to the supply of candidates, Miss Hughes showed that a large number, in excess of those required, after the unsuitable had been eliminated, made application to the large training-schools. These entered a smaller or a special institution, and it would be of value if there were some standard at which candidates for training as nurses must aim. They were very ignorant of the value of certificates, and sometimes served for a considerable period and then found the

two or three years they had given was time practically thrown away. She had in her mind a nurse who had held a district nursing appointment, and who was leaving as it was found her experience was insufficient. She held the certificate of the City Hospital, Birmingham, which is a fever hospital, and had no idea that this was an insufficient certificate for general purposes.

Miss HUGHES then said that, so far as she was aware, the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute was the only body in which the work of training nurses was continued after they left their schools. The Superintendents inspected the work of the nurses, and, after years of observation as a Superintendent, with experience of nurses from all the principal training-schools, whose work she inspected once a week or once a fortnight, she could say that there was hardly a nurse whose work was not deficient in some particular.

Touching on the education of private nurses, Miss Hughes said that after a nurse left her training-school she worked for medical men whose methods differed from those to which she had been accustomed. This was a test of a nurse's training, and it needed a competent all-round woman to perform the work efficiently.

Miss Hughes explained that certificates once given could not be recovered by the institutions which issued them, and further gave instances in which the Q.V.J.I. had applied to institutions to verify certificates of comparatively recent date in response to which application no information was forthcoming, and letters received from the Matrons of these institutions showed that no records were kept.

Thus one Matron answered: "I am sorry I cannot answer the enclosed questions. I have made inquiries and ascertained that the certificate was given, but no record has been kept."

She further pointed out that the certificates awarded to nurses by some institutions merely testified to their technical proficiency, and made no mention of moral qualities.

She thought that all the points she had mentioned proved the great need of an outside authority and Board of Appeal to which nursing matters might be referred.

In reply to questions from the Chairman, Miss Hughes said that something should be done. This, in her opinion, should take the form of the formation of a central authority having certain powers. She considered revision of the Nursing Register, from time to time, was essential. As to the elimination of the names of nurses who proved unsuitable, Parliament has faced this difficulty when it passed the Midwives' Act (Clause 3 (v.)). She thought it might be possible, without proceeding to the extreme step of removal in cases of unbecoming but not criminal conduct, that a nurse should be cautioned or censured by a sub-committee before the extreme step of removal from the Register was proceeded with.

She estimated that, as when once the Register was established only trained nurses would be admitted to it, the number dealt with would be, roughly, 20,000, or about one-fourth of the attendants on the sick given in the last Census returns. Amongst thoroughly-trained nurses she thought the number of those who brought discredit on their profession was very few. The discredit was brought by women who assumed a title to which they had no right.

No hardship would be inflicted by the scheme of Registration proposed. The Register would be a

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