

Letter from Holland.



The Dutch Nursing Association has recently held its twelfth annual general meeting, this time at Amsterdam. Much was discussed at it, but if I should

venture to give you a full report of this meeting it would take more columns of this journal than your kind Editor could possibly grant me. Moreover, I fear—and this is much worse—that I should immensely bore you, and, therefore, I shall practise the blessed virtue of self-restraint. I shall not give an account of the splendid speech of the chairman, Prof. B. J. Konwer, from Utrecht, neither a summary of the lecture of Prof. Mendes da Costa on the modern treatment of lupus. The reports of the different Commissions—the Commission for the Provident Fund, for Arbitration, for the Pension Fund, for the editing of the Bond's organ, for the library, the Commission for the nursing of our sick military men by female nurses—all these subjects, and still more, I shall silently pass over. As to the last-mentioned Commission, it may perhaps interest you to know that, according to its report, our Minister of War is for the moment not at all desirous of the services of army nurses, such as are employed nowadays, not only in your country and in the United States, but also in Sweden, Denmark, and some parts of Germany. A hyper-conservative, anti-progressive Minister is indeed a very trying individual, but our present Cabinet is wholly constituted of such trying elements. We have to yield to fate; what cannot be cured must be endured (at least for the time being). We can only hope for better things in future.

Mais revenons à nos moutons. I shall drop all politics and return to the annual meeting of the Dutch Nursing Association—the *Bond*, as it is termed by us. Among all the subjects treated on that occasion, there is only one for which I claim your special attention. It is the report of the Commission for the training and the examination of male and female nurses.

Some explanations are, perhaps, not superfluous.

As to the education and examination of nurses, I am sorry to say that the state of things in this respect bears a somewhat chaotic character. A most fatal lack of uniformity is felt in this matter. Every hospital and nursing institution is fully entitled to certificate its nurses, who by virtue of the obtained diploma feel qualified to adopt the title of trained nurse. The public in general content themselves by simply asking whether the nurse they wish to employ in cases of illness has a certificate or not, if they do ask it at all—and this is still a most dubious question. And when the nurse really is certificated, well, then the matter is settled. The nurse is engaged without any further information about the real value of her diploma, about the institution or corporation by which she has been certificated. And, still worse, there are a large number of private nurses who have not a diploma at all. Why should they not settle themselves as private nurses? There is no law preventing them from doing so, and, as to their employers, they

are for the most part very ignorant and careless on this point. That such unqualified nurses often bring discredit upon the whole nursing profession does not count with them. But the qualified members of the vocation are rightly indignant at these parasites, and it touches their honour to banish these unworthy elements from their ranks. State Registration is hailed by some of them as the only panacea to call forth a better condition of things. For the present, however, the time does not seem ripe for it. This is the firm opinion of our authoritative medical men, and also of the most influential persons in our Dutch nursing world. The Head Council of the Dutch Nursing Association has spoken out in the negative. No State Registration as yet. And why not? Because sick nursing is still in a state of continual development. It cannot be considered already a complete thing. Everywhere in our country we find on the part of the competent authorities a desire to make higher demands on all those that are devoting themselves to the nursing profession, and this fact, added to the possibility that perhaps in a not far-off future a nurse may not be esteemed efficiently trained until she has learned also mental and obstetric nursing, makes it undesirable to insist on State examinations enacted by Order in Council, which might act like narrow corsets, checking all further development. And the principal point in view is raising the standard of nursing. There are, of course, also voices crying for State Registration, but their number is small compared with that of those who are voting against it.

I thought this short explanation of some interest for my English readers, that they may have some idea of the condition of things in Holland. The Commission, appointed by the Bond to make the education and examination of nurses the object of its strict and earnest study and investigation, has laid down its report on the line of no State Registration. Let me add to this that the members of the above-mentioned Committee are four medical men and two Matrons.

In this report are treated:—(a) The preliminary training of the probationers; (b) their admission to the hospitals; (c) their training; (d) the examinations.

As to the preliminary training of our probationers the conclusions of the Committee are as follows:—

1. It is most desirable that in the different hospitals, municipal as well as private institutions, a preliminary training in practical domestic matters shall be given to the probationers. (In several hospitals the method of such a preliminary training has already been practised, but it is not in general rule as yet.)

2. By the Bond's influence one or more preliminary training-schools for probationers shall be erected.

These conclusions called forth a lively discussion. Some speakers laid great stress on the necessity of such preliminary training-schools, more especially for the smaller hospitals, the larger ones being more able to provide themselves a preliminary training for their probationers. As to the desirableness of a preliminary training in this matter all proved unanimous.

The first conclusion has been accepted by the general meeting; the second is rejected.

As to the admission of probationers to our hospitals, the general meeting agreed with the Committee's conclusion, that no probationer shall be admitted under twenty years of age.

With regard to the period of the training of our

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