

The International Council of Nurses.*

(Continued from p. 28.)

AFTERNOON SESSION.

II.—EDUCATION.

The remainder of the Afternoon Session was devoted to the subject of Education—to the definition of a theoretical and practical curriculum of education and a minimum standard qualifying for Registration as a Trained Nurse.

The President, Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, invited Miss Goodrich, Superintendent of the Training-School for Nurses, New York Hospital, and Delegate to the Council of the American Society of Superintendents, to read the paper prepared by Miss Nutting, Superintendent of the Johns Hopkins Hospital Training-School for Nurses, Baltimore.

Mrs. Fenwick said, as time was so limited, one day having proved quite insufficient in which to read and consider many excellent reports and papers presented to the Council, she would suggest that Miss Nutting's paper be taken as the basis of the afternoon's discussion, the remaining papers to be printed in the Transactions of the meeting.

Miss Goodrich said she greatly regretted that so splendid a paper as that she would have the honour of reading was not to be presented by the writer in person.

SUGGESTIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS FOR STATE REGISTRATION.

By Miss M. ADELAIDE NUTTING.

In asking the State to establish and maintain definite standards of education for nurses, we call upon her to look carefully into the whole system of nursing education, to inquire not only into the nature and extent of the professional education offered by training-schools, but also into the qualifications and preliminary education presented by candidates for admission to such schools. For it may be laid down as a fundamental proposition in considering this subject that, no matter how complete and thorough a professional training may be offered, it is of limited or doubtful utility unless given to those prepared by previous education to profit to the fullest degree by it.

The requirements for entrance to training-schools, therefore, compel our attention at the outset to any suggestions which may be made as to educational standards for State Registration.

Certain points which are little considered among the requirements in other branches of education—namely, age, height, size, physical condition, freedom from family ties, &c.—have long taken a place of relatively high importance in weighing the merits of applicants for admission to training-schools. In reference to the *one indispensable* re-

quirement for all other kinds of education, academic or professional, that is, a suitable preliminary education, the training-school for nurses has been singularly unexacting. Indeed, its doors have been hospitably held open to applicants conspicuously deficient in this respect, and it is well to consider just here some of the reasons why the requirements in this particular should not be higher and more rigorously applied.

It is well known that many people, among them doctors, and even the heads of some training-schools, still honestly believe that it is not only not necessary, but undesirable, that nurses should be educated women. It is equally well known that many highly-educated women are attracted to the work, yet they shrink from the long hours, arduous labour, and severe discipline which the training includes, especially when it is clear that little in the way of systematic, suitable instruction of a truly educational character accompanies it. What is perhaps not so well known is the fact that it is exceedingly difficult to set up standards of any kind and maintain them unflinchingly while the arbitrary conditions of the hospital in which the practical work is done require a certain definite number of students to carry on its work. An enormous mass of work must be accomplished daily by students only in any hospital in which a training-school is established, and, whether the students are well qualified or not, they cannot be permitted to fall in number below a certain specified limit, or they will prove insufficient for the needs of the hospital. It is easy to see that under these conditions it is impossible to reject beyond a certain point, even when there is a full realisation on the part of the Superintendent of the training-school that some of those permitted to remain are far below the standard which she would like to maintain, and are unpromising material out of which to try to develop satisfactory results. These students are kept because, even though poor, they are the best at the moment available, and the product of their activity as students is necessary to the maintenance of the hospital.

The ways by which the educational requirements for admission can be improved and brought to the right standard are, first, by an improvement in the schools themselves. The fact that in schools where the teaching is known to be excellent, the opportunities liberal, and the conditions of life wholesome, the number of applicants well prepared by previous education grows larger each year points conclusively a way to advances in this direction.

And when, in addition to such reforms, provision is made in hospitals generally for a body of students which will constitute a nursing staff large enough to allow for a very rigid system of sifting and selection, not only at the close of the probationary period, but also, perhaps, at the close of each school year, there will be a marked improvement in the educational status of those finally graduated, and

* Meeting held at Berlin, June, 1904.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)