

## THE MATRONS' COUNCIL OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

The quarterly meeting of the Matrons' Council was held at 431, Oxford Street, London, W., on Wednesday, October 11th. In the unavoidable absence of the President, Miss M. Heather Bigg, the chair was taken by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick. A number of members from London and the country attended, every chair in the room being occupied.

The Hon. Secretary, Miss Mollett, read the minutes of the last meeting, which were confirmed, and reported letters of regret from members unable to attend. She also announced that Miss Wright, Matron of Stobhill Hospital, Glasgow, had accepted the invitation of the Matrons' Council to act as its delegate to the meeting of the National Council of Women, in session at Glasgow. She had also promised to send a report of the proceedings to the Council.

The Chairman mentioned that Miss M. Harvey, in a letter to THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING, had requested that at the next meeting of the Matrons' Council it should be asked in how many hospitals it is the rule to teach probationers the A.B.C. facts respecting venereal disease before sending them into the wards. Some members said that they gave definite instructions on the subject in their classes when speaking of infectious diseases, and others that, in the event of a patient suffering from a contagious disease of this kind being admitted to a ward, the Sister would give the necessary instructions to the probationers. It was also pointed out that the fact that special crockery was in some instances used for such patients emphasised the danger of infection and the need for special precautions.

It was agreed that a lady doctor should be invited to address the next meeting of the Council on the subject, and that the Matrons' Council should formulate a scheme of instruction for probationers.

### APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP.

Applications for membership of the Council were then considered, and the following ladies were elected:—

Miss Semphill, Matron of the West Herts Hospital.

Miss Belsham, Matron of the London Homœopathic Hospital.

Miss Lewis, Matron of the Isolation Hospital, Dronfield, near Sheffield.

### THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES.

It was agreed that full consideration should be given at the January meeting to the election

of a delegate from the Council to the meeting of the International Council of Nurses at Cologne in August, 1912, and to the arrangements for members desiring to attend.

At the conclusion of the business meeting there was an interval during which tea was served, and the members had an opportunity for social intercourse, of which they availed themselves with great animation.

### THE NATIONAL INSURANCE BILL.

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick then gave a brief résumé of the most important facts concerning the National Insurance Bill as it affects nurses, referring to the Clause in the Bill, as introduced, providing that no insured person should be entitled to sickness benefit or disablement benefit during any period when she is provided with board and lodging by her employer. This specially affected nurses, and at meetings convened by the National Union of Women Workers, the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain and Ireland, and of Industrial Societies, public protest was made against the injustice of the Clause, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer agreed to its deletion and had substituted an amendment which was most unsatisfactory. It provided that

#### REDUCED BENEFITS AND PAYMENTS.

"Where employed persons receive, as a condition of service, wages during sickness—*e.g.*, clerks, domestic servants, seamen, nurses in hospitals, etc., and in some localities agricultural labourers—such persons to be excluded from part of the sickness insurance and a reduced rate of contributions accepted for the remaining benefits (disablement allowance, etc.)."

Mrs. Fenwick said that the question of the desirability of nurses contracting out of the Act was sometimes raised. This she did not advise. The National Insurance Bill was an attempt on the part of the State to help the workers, other similar legislation might be proposed in the future, and in her opinion nurses should stand in, and try to get the best terms possible.

Probably no one realized when the Insurance Bill was first introduced how many interests it would touch. Nurses received in the great majority of hospitals besides a small salary, and board, lodging, washing, and uniform, the best possible medical attention and nursing care when ill. It was impossible to compute the cost of this, but it probably amounted to many thousands of pounds annually. Of these benefits they might be deprived.

The Central Hospital Council for London had approached the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and suggested, presumably without consulting hospital nurses, that they should not benefit under the Bill. To this Mr. Lloyd George would not agree, but conceded that if the employer undertook to provide certain benefits for the employee then the contributions from the State, the employer, and the employee should be halved.

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