

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TRAINED NURSES.

THE NURSING OF THE INSURED SICK.

The third paper discussed at the Afternoon Session on November 27th was presented by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick on "The Nursing of the Insured Sick."

Mrs. Fenwick said:—It will be within the memory of the members of this Council that the exclusion of direct representatives of the nursing profession from the Advisory Committee appointed by the Commission under the National Insurance Act, led to animated controversy between our National Council and the National Health Insurance Commissioners. The discrimination against trained nurses as a class (the only class of workers excluded from representation) deprived us of the power to advise on questions of vital importance to our profession, and on the standard of nursing to be provided for the insured sick.

The result has been very instructive, and as your President I have been by no means idle during the past year in urging, through other channels than the Commission, the imperative need for highly skilled nursing as a Benefit under the Act.

Upon the initiative of Miss Mollett, the Trained Women Nurses' Friendly Society was formed for the insurance of trained nurses, on the best terms possible, which has been successfully conducted by women officers, and in January, 1913, it took part in forming the Association of Approved Societies, on the Executive Committee of which I was elected. I was thus able to urge the necessity for the provision of trained nursing for insured persons, and was included in a sub-committee to investigate the question of the best method of carrying this into effect. We presented a Report on the subject which has been widely distributed, and has had very considerable influence in arousing public interest in the question. Our Report concluded with the following recommendation:—

"That some scheme of universal nursing (Nursing Benefit) would be of inestimable value to the health of the country, and hence to the finances of Approved Societies. We consider it fully proved that trained nursing undoubtedly operates to reduce the frequency and duration of sickness. As we have stated above, we consider it impracticable that any universal scheme for the nursing of insured persons could adequately be conducted by the Approved Societies themselves, and we therefore recommend that

urgent representation be made by Approved Societies to the Government that a scheme for 'Nursing Benefit' be introduced into the Insurance Act Amendment Bill, and that an adequate Nursing Service should be provided for all insured persons by the Insurance Committees, in the same way that Medical Benefit is at present provided."

In response to several requests from those interested in the question, the Executive Committee of the Association of Approved Societies convened a National Conference on the Nursing of Insured Persons, which was held on November 26th at the Caxton Hall, London, presided over by Mr. Charles Bathurst, M.P., at which 207 Nursing and Approved Societies, and Insurance Committees, also the Local Government Board, were represented. It was a memorable gathering, and was addressed by Miss Amy Hughes, Q.V.J.I.; Miss K. Stephenson, Wiltshire Nursing Association; Dr. H. H. Mills, member of the London Insurance Committee; and myself, as your President, when I presented the following paper to the Conference:—

A BUSINESS PROPOSITION.

The evolution of the care of the National Health is undoubtedly towards State Organisation, and those members of the community, amongst them trained nurses, who have been for many years fighting preventable disease, welcomed with a thrill the announcement in 1911 that at last a National Health Bill was drafted, presumably with the hearty co-operation of the experts who could each offer practical suggestions in their own departments in making the measure vastly useful to the people. Alas! this is not the method on Olympus.

For the maintenance of a high standard of health in civilised communities, the human atom must be encircled by sanitary science—preventive hygiene, preventive and curative medicine, and preventive and curative nursing, all one, and indivisible, making the perfect circle, a trinity of effort in which each has its own indispensable function in preserving wholeness and soundness of body and mind. Any organised scheme for compulsory insurance should therefore have incorporated and provided for these benefits, and had expert knowledge been sought, carefully digested and adapted, a great and beneficent scheme for the upbuilding and preservation of the national health might have been evolved.

It was because no such far-seeing statesmanship went to the making of the National Insurance Act that we are here to-day to discuss a missing arc in the sanitary circle.

When we first scanned the Bill in its early and most inchoate state, and found that *trained* nursing was not even mentioned in its provisions, we hoped to rectify this omission by sweet reason-

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