

PROTECTION OF TRAINED NURSES' UNIFORM.

We all know how endless have been the discussions on the question of the public wearing trained nurses' uniform, whether by the Society woman at work or at play, the domestics of doctors and dentists, by tradesmen's employées for the advertisement of their goods, by ladies of easy virtue in the pursuit of gain, to say nothing of begging dogs.

The Thirteenth Annual Convention of the California State Nurses' Association recently tackled the subject with spirit, and the discussion which followed on Miss Frances Nelson's paper on "A Plea for the Protection of Our Uniform" proves how this abuse rages in the States just as it does in this country.

Miss Nelson runs a Nurses' Outfitting Company at San Diego, and as a loyal professional woman she writes:—"When cafeteria girls absolutely untrained, dental office girls, nursery maids in public places, as well as practical nurses (nurse attendants) come to me and request nurses' uniforms, aprons and caps, and specify they must look like nurses, I rebel. I frequently see these girls on the streets in full regalia, and some lack dignity in a marked degree, so it can readily be seen that this is most degrading to all nurses in the eyes of the public. . . . Upon careful investigation I find that in many cases, though not in all, the girls themselves are not particularly desirous of being so attired, but that it is the requirement of their employers, who wish the public to think they are getting the services of graduate nurses. . . . Only State Registration seems adequate to cope with the situation. And by this means the problem will, be solved for the whole State, and I hope for the entire nation, as I am sure the same conditions *must* exist elsewhere; but what we need is *action* individually and collectively."

A brisk discussion ensued.

Mrs. O'Neill said: "I don't see why the nurses' uniform is always picked on for fancy dance parties. . . . At a *dansant* for the Red Cross which I attended, the ushers were Red Cross nurses. I asked, Are these Red Cross nurses? The answer was 'No, they are Society girls dressed up as such.' They were beautiful, nice girls, but they did not act just exactly as one expects Red Cross nurses to act in public. I hope we will take some measure to prevent ushers at theatres, *dansants*, &c., from using the uniform, and that every county delegate goes back and puts it on record, say, that the county association has the authorisation of the State Association that they object very strongly to the uniform being used by anybody but a graduate nurse."

Mrs. Van Eran said: "I consider the Society women the worst offenders." She proposed instructing the Women's Clubs, "who do not appear to get our viewpoint. . . . But I wonder if we

are ever going to get far until we have some official legislation protecting us, the same as sailors and soldiers. That seems the only way."

Miss Wrigley considered this a good and valuable suggestion. "We had that problem in Pasadena. It was found that women in nurses' uniforms were in the drug store demonstrating corn plasters. The Society young women used nurses' uniforms in selling Red Cross Christmas stamps. A protest was made about it, and while it was not very kindly received, it has not happened again."

Mrs. Erickson said: "Other offenders were the college people; they were putting out their trained dieticians in caps and gowns looking exactly like the nurses. Result, that I said to one of them, 'I did not know you were a trained nurse.' 'Oh, I am not; this is our uniform,' was the reply."

The President remarked that the trouble arose because there was such a variety of imitation uniforms, and added "I wonder if we would be making progress to take action to standardise what is graduate nurses' uniform?"

Mrs. Waterman said the mercantile people were the worst offenders: prominent drug companies insisted on their saleswomen wearing nurses' costumes.

Mrs. Webber said barbers and sanitary shops were offenders.

Mrs. Rasmussen complained of untrained young women employed in a doctor's office wearing nurses' uniforms.

Mrs. O'Neill pointed out that there was a law against the use of the Red Cross, and considered much might be done by objecting in individual cases to the use of nurses' uniform. "We do not make it public enough that we object to it—we sit down and say nothing."

The President proposed deciding on a standard uniform for "registered" nurses, presenting it to the State for adoption, and then to the National Association. "Have it protected by law," she said, "and take action against people who use it illegally."

Miss Sorgenfrey, who has evidently a keen appreciation of the idiosyncrasies of the daughters of Eve, remarked: "Some don't like long sleeves, and some object to high collars. How are you going to make it universal?"

The President thought by the choice of the majority.

Then a whole floor full of bogies uprose and demanded consideration.

Some nurses would wish to wear their school uniforms. Then register a cap. The cap belonged to the school. White was the nurses' usual wear. You could not copyright a white gown. In many hotels nurses might not appear in public rooms in uniform. Was there a national cap? No one had heard of one.

Miss Sweeney wished that trained nurses should not wear uniform in the street—both for sanitary and ethical reasons. Let the training schools adopt the rule. It would then be known that those who did wear it were the untrained.

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