

## THE COLLEGE OF NURSING, LTD.

### NURSING CONFERENCE, JUNE 6TH.

Major-General Sir Berkeley Moynihan presided at the evening session of the Conference organized by the College of Nursing, Ltd., at 11, Chandos Street, W., on June 6th.

#### THE HIGHER EDUCATION OF NURSES AND ITS RELATION TO APPLICANTS FOR TRAINING.

The first paper was presented by Miss Gullan, Sister Tutor at St. Thomas' Hospital, on the Higher Education of Nurses and its relation to applicants for training, who said that the war had brought us up against the defects in our System of Nursing, which can produce such inequalities of training, and permit the curiously varying standard of efficiency found among the trained members of the profession. Lack of co-ordination was our weakness. Progress in one branch was nullified by retrogression in another, and efforts at reconstruction met with almost insurmountable difficulties. For true progress in the Nursing Body all elements must be incorporated and harmoniously carried along to a higher level. Existing conditions outside our immediate sphere of influence must be recognized, as they cannot be swept away till a higher standard of living and education brings its own amelioration.

For this reason reconstruction cannot closely follow the lines laid down in America, or even Australia, with their large standardized hospitals and absence of the diverse elements, but it could gain much by adopting their liberal outlook on the theoretical education of nurses.

The link that still binds all these diverse elements, as it has been the motive power of their existence, is the sense of vocation that is deeply rooted in the hearts of British women, whatever their class or creed, and the higher education of nurses must mean rather the development of that sense to its highest powers of understanding, sympathy, and practical expression, by intellectual reasoning and a trained observation, than the accumulation of scientific knowledge as such. The sense of vocation is not always conscious possession. It may be effectively replaced by a sense of duty and an earnestness of purpose, or it may even manifest only as a desire to do something useful; but with the careful fostering of ideals, and the maintaining of a living interest, both may be developed to a very real enthusiasm and selfless devotion, and here the Matron's influence is paramount.

Speaking of the variety of candidates, Miss Gullan said that candidates from the so-called leisured and professional classes, with High School and College education or good private tuition, while being able more readily to accept theoretical instruction, must have the practical and economic side more carefully developed, while those who have had home cares and responsibilities, enforcing a practical outlook on life, are usually endowed with much common-sense, and adapt themselves

readily to ward work, but are often sadly deficient in the education that will develop these powers to their highest usefulness.

The speaker also emphasised the value of preliminary training schools, and then outlined a suggested course of training for probationers throughout.

During her training she should have the advantage of lectures on such subjects as district nursing, infant welfare, baby clinics, Mothers' Schools, industrial welfare, &c. A nurse's life is so filled with the needs of the sick and suffering, and the cure or alleviation of disease, that she is apt to forget the good old maxim, "Prevention is better than cure," and fail to appreciate the importance of those branches of preventive work. Such subjects could be presented in greater detail at post-graduate classes.

Finally, for those desirous of taking up teaching and administrative posts, and the higher branches of the profession, a year's college course in Household and Social Science, adapted to the requirements of the nursing profession, was advocated.

Miss Gullan showed a lack of appreciation of the work of private nurses when she said: "It is difficult to retain ideals in private nursing; they get so little nourishment. All honour to those who do." She considers it advisable that a nurse should not take up private nursing until she has filled some post of responsibility "very suitably in a small hospital, where she would gain experience in administration, and the management of patients and their friends, and until she has shed the somewhat selfish garb worn throughout her training by assuming the full care of patients and of the training of probationers."

"District nurses," says Miss Gullan, "have richly preserved the highest ideals of nursing, and are the sweet leavening of our body, but even they would benefit largely by a wider education, especially in preventive work."

MISS STEELE INNES (Matron, General Infirmary, Leeds) said that what was wanted more than anything else was to attract women of education, character, resolution, and an independent mind. Education meant greater accuracy of thought and work, and an educated nurse would be less likely than an uneducated one to give a wrong medicine, or forget orders. Good nurses could not be turned out if minds were starved, and Matrons must influence their Boards to give more free time. If they did this they would turn out more nurses who would follow in the steps of Florence Nightingale.

MISS E. C. JOSEPH (the next invited speaker) advocated the pernicious system of training specialists, village nurses, district nurses, and other branches; and then that all, whatever their training—or lack of training—should enter for one examination. The time, she said, had come to specialize. You should not put a racehorse to do the work of a Shetland pony, or a fully trained hospital nurse in a country village. Registrationists said that only the three years' trained nurse should be eligible for registration. She advocated a system of registration on the lines of that arranged for

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