

interests of private nurses), who said that she "hoped all the independent nurses are awake, and that they will use their votes with clear judgment in the coming election of their General Nursing Council," and from Miss A. M. Bushby, Matron of the Queen's Hospital for Children, Hackney Road, who wrote: "I hope you will tell the meeting that should I be elected I will do all in my power to further the interests of nurses, most especially of those who have been trained in Children's Hospitals, and that I am standing absolutely as an Independent Candidate." Miss Cathlin C. du Sautoy sent a letter in which she stated that she has always considered that it was only by State Registration that Nurses could hope to have any real control of their own profession, disciplinary powers, a one portal examination, and real educational advantages provided in the Training Schools—in short, that the recognition of the Profession of Nursing by the State would put it on the same level, economically, and professionally, as well as educationally, as other professions.

She considered further that Registration, and all that it entails, could only be of real use to nurses and the public whom they serve if they themselves governed their own profession, and, incidentally, managed the money they provide, and did not leave this to men and women of other professions, or, perhaps worse still, of no profession at all.

#### **Mrs. Bedford Fenwick gives an Account of Stewardship and Outlines Future Policy.**

The Chairman then invited Mrs. Bedford Fenwick to address the meeting.

Mrs. BEDFORD FENWICK, who, on rising to speak, was warmly received, said that she saw in the audience before her many faces which she knew, faces of those who had been faithful supporters of the movement for State Registration of nurses for many years, and who had given both work and money to the cause.

The Council appointed under the Act of 1919 had not worked without differences, considering the elements of which it was composed it would have been almost a miracle if it had. But when summoned she thought it had come together in the desire—she could speak, at any rate, for those who had worked so long to obtain the Act—to work in the most harmonious spirit for the sake of the nurses.

During the two-and-a-half years the Council had met she has never missed a meeting, and she thought the same could be said of her supporters. The Council had worked strenuously. As soon as it met she had proposed that the work should be divided up between a series of Standing Committees, and this course was adopted. Finance, Education and Examination, Registration, and Disciplinary. There was an immense amount of work to be done, especially by the Education and Registration Committees. Nursing education had been allowed to run wild, and when it came to investigating qualifications for registration the sifting of knowledge was a very difficult work to perform.

Then there was the Disciplinary and Penal Committee. They did not hear anything about that but it was one of the most important of all. This was the Committee which would investigate accusations against any Registered nurse; it was very important that nurses should be governed by their peers, and that the Committee should be formed of Registered Nurses. Nurses were placed on the Register by the whole Council, and they must be removed by the whole Council, not by any Committee. The Rules provided for this safeguard, but it was a provision which had been contested.

#### **CONSTRUCTIVE WORK.**

During the first eighteen months of its existence, the General Nursing Council had done an immense amount of constructive work. It had drafted the Constitution and published the Rules for Registration and Education, and issued pamphlets containing Syllabuses for Training in General Nursing, in Mental Nursing, in the Nursing of Sick Children, in Fever Nursing, and for Male Nurses.

The Rules provide for a just Constitution, and had they not been tampered with through outside influence there would have been no friction in the General Nursing Council.

#### **DISRUPTION.**

The first rift in the lute was the proposal that the Existing and Intermediate Nurses should be deprived of the record of their certificates on the State Register. The result of that disastrous proposition, if it had been carried into effect, would have been that the whole of the nurses at present in practice and holding good certificates of training, would have been deprived of their hard-earned qualifications and unable to compete for promotion with State Certificated Nurses when the State Examination was inaugurated. It was a grossly unfair and illogical proposal. It arose because a limited number of persons in prominent positions had not got certificates of training, and was largely a personal matter. When the issue involved was understood, the minority on the Council felt that they had to make the choice between loyalty to the nurses, and the defence of their rights, and what was termed "disloyalty to the Council." Without hesitation they chose the former course. An agitation to prevent this wrong before it was too late was inaugurated. The attitude of the Ministry of Health was not sympathetic, but the nurses themselves impressed the Ministry with the justice of the demand and eventually this right was won.

The minority on the Council had suffered many indignities; their proposals were voted down on nearly every occasion, not on the merits of the case, but by a partisan vote. It required a good deal of courage to stand up and be voted down, not after reasoned argument, but by those who sat round the Council table like wax images month after month, seldom attempting to justify their votes by speech, but voting against the privileges and rights of the nurses. Readers of

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)