

THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL FOR NURSING EDUCATION.

SECOND ANNUAL MEETING.

The following Official Report has been contributed by Miss Katherine Olmsted, Chief of Division of Nursing, League of Red Cross Societies:—

The European Council for Nursing Education held its second annual meeting at the headquarters of the League of Red Cross Societies, Paris, March 12th–16th, 1923. About three hundred nurses from eighteen different countries attended the conference.

It was not just the interest of the special papers and the individual speakers, nor even the great pleasure and satisfaction of having an opportunity to meet and become acquainted with nurses from so many countries, that made this recent meeting in Paris unique and different from all other nursing conventions I ever attended. To my mind the spirit of unanimity and the definitely recognised interdependence of nurses and those interested in promoting nursing education was the greatest contribution this meeting gave.

As never before, it was acknowledged that the interests of a group of nurses in one country are really not separate from those of any other country, and, that in discussing nursing education, persons not themselves nurses often have ideas, suggestions and plans well worth listening to, and often worthy of adoption even by nurses.

Not less important was the value of having hospital administrators, Red Cross officials, doctors and persons actually responsible for the education of nurses, and in some countries the lack of education, hear the many very excellent papers and discussions read by nurses who are successfully administering training schools in near by countries.

No one who attended this meeting, called by nurses and conducted by nurses, would question their wisdom in opening all but the business meetings freely to everyone interested in nursing, if they could have seen and listened to the many earnest conversations. On all sides, heads and tongues were busy, and many of us overheard remarks such as: "Well, if they can do that in ——— we can do it in ———." "We can have a longer course just as well as not." "We too must have a modern central school building." In one country where nursing standards have always been at a very low level and no one at all interested in helping a few struggling nurses to improve it, a most influential and well-informed woman has returned with the determination, she says, "to have something worth while for our nurses to tell about at the next conference."

The conference demonstrated convincingly that we need this means of thinking together, and further that we need the benefit of joint judgment and free open debate upon our nursing problems.

Just as each group is profoundly affected by the seriousness of the nursing questions arising in

its own country, so it is the direct responsibility of each to help to solve them.

The European Council for Nursing Education is scarcely a year old, born only last June, in Prague; it has scarcely had time to formulate its policies, and as its President, Miss Newton, from Belgrade, aptly remarked, "We thought we had a pigeon, but we find we have an ostrich." All plans are made for a small group of nurses to comfortably discuss their problems together, but the spirit which brought so many nurses from countries advanced in nursing and so many advanced thinkers from countries considered very backward in nursing, is a spirit and a force which cannot be dealt with easily nor carelessly.

The remarkable interest and enthusiasm of all those attending the Conference gave life to a new organisation, and plans are being made and methods being studied in order to successfully adapt this organisation to meet the needs for future work.

I believe that in the minds of many of us are the questions:—

What shall be the future of this organisation, and is there a need for such an organisation and special work to which it should consecrate itself?

I believe that the very near future will show us that it must enter upon a much broader programme than was ever conceived in Prague last year by the few nurses who originated the Council, and who met solely and selfishly for the purpose of discussing and gaining stimulation and new ideas for themselves from those similarly occupied in other countries. Much thought will undoubtedly be put into the formation of a suitable constitution for the Council, but the following aims expressed in the original are worthy of survival:—

1. The further attainment of uniformly high standards in schools of nursing which are being established in Europe.

2. The initiation of a campaign of education destined to inform the public as to—

(a) The standards requisite for a fundamental education in nursing;

(b) The position which the nurse should occupy in the community after her graduation.

3. The establishment of a simple organisation which will serve the nurses until such times as they are able to form their own national association and become members of the International Council of Nurses.

It has been said that successful Conferences are dependent upon certain elements, of which several important ones are: Leadership, the development of membership, and presentation of concrete problems for solution.

Before the first few days of the meeting were finished several leaders became recognised—the first and most generally acknowledged was Baroness Mannerheim. Had we not known that she represented, as President, the International Council of Nurses, had we never heard of her magnificent work for nurses in Finland and

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