

GENERAL NURSING COUNCIL ELECTION.

COUNTING THE BALLOT PAPERS.

Having been informed by the Returning Officer that the opening of the envelopes would commence on Monday, January 29th, at 11.15 a.m., I was present a little beforehand, but found, however, that some time previously the Chairman, with I understand the help of the Registrar, had already opened the large envelopes addressed to the Returning Officer, in spite of my protest at the last Council Meeting against such a course, and he informed me that he had placed in a box a certain number of papers he intended to reject. None of the Candidates had been present when these were opened; he had done it entirely on his own initiative. I asked why the papers had been rejected, and he informed me that the voting paper was outside the identification envelope. I looked up Rule 4, which deals with this matter, and read:

"Each voter . . . shall place her voting paper folded face inwards in the appropriate identification envelope, and *securely fasten the same.*"

The Chairman informed me that although he was rejecting certain papers because they were outside of the identification envelope, he was allowing to pass through certain envelopes *that were open*, as there were only a few of them. I sat behind, and a little to one side, of one of the girls who were opening the envelopes, and counted twenty of these *open* in a very short time. Twice I called the attention of the Chairman to this fact, and said that if he were rejecting papers because they were outside the identification envelope, it would be only fair to reject those envelopes which were open, as the same Rule covered both cases. His reply to me was: "I am going to pass them; if you object, you can apply to the Minister."

On the second day, when the actual counting took place, eight gentlemen from the Marylebone Town Hall were kind enough to conduct the business for us, and indeed it would not have been possible to manage without expert assistance—it was a most complicated election. One of the experts remarked that it was a pity the General Nursing Council had not consulted somebody who was used to the business of elections before making the arrangements, as it could have been very much simplified.

There was no definite statement made as to how many voting papers were sent out, or how many were returned; about eight thousand of the latter, I gathered. Neither was there a statement as to how many of the number returned were accepted, and how many rejected. When I suggested that it was usual to add the number accepted and the number rejected together and to make it total with the number received, the Chairman gave me to understand that it was never possible to make the numbers agree. In all properly conducted elections, however, they *have to be made to agree*, if the election is to be valid, otherwise who is to say how many papers may have been abstracted?

The Council, as a matter of fact, were not allowed to make any criticisms on the special election scheme; it was finished and printed before being laid on the table at the very last Council meeting previous to the election. From the beginning, of course, it was a foregone conclusion that the Independent Candidates on the General Part of the Register would not be elected, and sitting for eleven hours listening to the counting, I came to the conclusion that either the papers had been marked for the nurses, or that a statement made to me was true, *i.e.*, that certain nurses were required to take their papers to a sort of class where the Matron, or some other person in authority, told them where to place their crosses.

MAUDE MACCALLUM.

REGISTERED NURSES' PARLIAMENTARY COUNCIL.

A meeting of the Executive Committee of the Registered Nurses' Parliamentary Council was held at 431, Oxford Street, London, W., on Saturday, February 3rd, Mrs. Bedford Fenwick presiding in the absence of Miss Beatrice Kent, the President.

The minutes of the last meeting having been read and confirmed, arising out of the minutes the Hon. Secretary announced an acknowledgement, by the late Minister of Health, of a Resolution sent to him, together with a Statement *re* the Syllabus of Training in General Nursing.

CORRESPONDENCE.

The correspondence included letters of regret at inability to attend, from which we quote, *re* the General Nursing Council Election:—

Miss M. Heather-Bigg, R.R.C.—"Really, the nurses deserve to remain under the heel of serfdom. They have lost their best friend and supporter."

Miss G. Le Geyt.—"Not only has the profession lost the legitimate guidance of its most statesman-like mind by the non-election of our beloved leader, Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, but the strength of mind of the outspoken, courageous minority, who struggled to uphold the principle of self-determination for nurses."

"With the snail's pace of progress we adopt in England, I tremble to think of the times and struggles ahead for the nursing profession before the shackles forged by the votes of the present-day institutional staffs, through their lack of vision, can be broken down, and nurses may come to know the real meaning of self-government."

Miss E. B. Kingsford.—"Heaven help Nursing in this country."

Miss F. E. Wise.—"We must show up the tricks that have entirely destroyed the value of the Register and the freedom of the electorate."

Other correspondence included a cable from Miss Jentie Paterson, from New Zealand, announcing that she was sending a donation of £5 to the Parliamentary Council.

Letters from Dr. Chapple, M.P., and Major R. W. Barnett, M.P., acknowledging the congratula-

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