

"The British College of Nurses is mainly composed of such courageous people. We have blazed our trail—we have moved mountains of privilege and prejudice, we have obtained legal powers of organisation, we now desire to apply those powers for the benefit of the world we live in. The aim of this College is to help make that world healthier and in consequence—happier—so that year after year when we meet at our Annual Dinner we may report to the distinguished guests who honour us with their presence good progress in all the branches of the activities of our College.

"I thank the speakers warmly for their kind words and join with them in wishing, increasingly, success to the British College of Nurses.

"Ladies and Gentlemen—the Toast is 'The British College of Nurses.'"

The Toast was honoured amid great enthusiasm.

The Guests.

The next toast, that of "The Guests," was proposed by Miss Helen L. Pearse, F.B.C.N., who said:—

It is my privilege to give you the Toast of our Guests whose interest and sympathy have followed us in our initial steps, and amongst whom I am pleased to know we have various distinguished representatives of Public Health Services.

More and more it must be recognised that if the Nurse is to be able to co-operate effectively with the profession of medicine her education must not be limited to that of the care of the sick, but must include instruction in preventive work, the care of school children, and other branches, as nurses are more and more employed on Public Bodies dealing with the National Health. Post-graduate courses in these subjects are very necessary, and we hope that these our College will be able to supply.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Toast is "The Guests."

The Response.

This was very cordially received and responded to by Mrs. Baillie Reynolds, who said: May I first express my pride and pleasure as a laywoman at being invited to so professional a gathering as this delightful dinner of the British College of Nurses. In this distinguished gathering I feel in a position to understand the point of view of a spinster at a mothers' meeting, who earnestly assured the new vicar that she had "took part in those meetings for ten years, and never heard a word spoken that was unfit for the ears of an unmarried lady."

I am proud to think I owe the honour to my more than 30 years' friendship with Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, and to my having been on the staff of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING as a reviewer for twelve years.

Although I am not a nurse I have been an employer of nurses. I had two nurses in my house for five months, and I cannot tell you what a comfort they were, or what tact and power of self-effacement they had. Nurses do, indeed, seem to be superhuman.

I should like to mention that as Chairman of the Council of the Girls' Realm Guild, which makes grants for professional training to girls of the educated classes, I was never applied to by girls who wished to train as nurses, and this I attributed to the fact that training does not begin soon enough. No girl can afford to waste four years after leaving school. She wants to train *at once*. It is a point which I think is worthy of the consideration of the Nursing Profession.

Miss Mildred Heather-Bigg, R.R.C., M.B.C.N., said:—

On behalf of myself and my fellow professional guests,

I wish to return very cordial thanks for the way our health has been proposed.

We all feel it a privilege to be here to-night, at the first Annual Dinner of the British College of Nurses. We hope as the years go by this Annual Dinner will be as inevitably and as vitally associated with Nursing activities as the Lord Mayor's Banquet is with municipal activity.

This is a very unselfish wish—because the longer the dinners continue to be given, the more certain it is that many of us will no longer be alive to enjoy them. But, living now, we can enjoy them in anticipation, can even forecast certain permanent features of these dinners. Fifty years hence certain outstanding figures will be here no longer. But fifty years, nay a hundred years hence, certain names will be pronounced with gratitude, and acclaimed with enthusiasm; these are Florence Nightingale, Isla Stewart and Ethel Gordon Fenwick. Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, besides being first President of The British College of Nurses, and the founder of the International Council of Nurses, is the pride, the hope, and the triumphant champion of the whole Nursing Profession. Sitting with us to-night she must feel with Emerson—the reward of a thing well done is to have done it.

The Chair.

The toast of "The Chair" was proposed by Mr. Walter Spencer, O.B.E., F.R.C.S., who said:—It is a great pleasure to me to have the privilege of proposing a vote of thanks to our Chairman, Mrs. Bedford Fenwick. It was as a student at St. Bartholomew's Hospital that I had the opportunity first of observing Mrs. Fenwick, who had been recently appointed Matron and Superintendent of Nursing. She quickly made her mark as a pioneer, and as one who was aiming at the creation of a real Nursing Profession, at the same time that she raised the level of discipline, and began the extension of education of her nurses. Marriage was not allowed to interfere with the great work she had begun, and much to the advantage of the movement, there was added the ready help, support, and co-operation of Dr. Bedford Fenwick, to whom all nurses owe a debt of gratitude. I must add a word about THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING, which Mrs. Fenwick and Miss Breay have so ably edited for so many years, and of which they may be so justly proud. Only those who have had experience of such literary work can realise the amount of mental and physical effort needed for a publication depending upon regularity of output. I just refer also to the institution of the most successful International Council of Nurses and of the Registered Nurses Society in anticipation of State Registration. We recognise in Mrs. Bedford Fenwick a remarkable personality, endowed with rare vision, genius, tenacity, and courage. Her work has always been of supreme value, because it is based on knowledge and experience, therefore, in the truest sense, that of an expert. With fine gifts of statesmanship, steady purpose and patience, she has accomplished the work she set out to do—no haphazard work or plan, but from the beginning a definite scheme, with logical sequence, which has brought about the Statutory Registration of Nurses, after a State Examination, and now a College of Nurses. I give you the toast of Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, a great pioneer, and a great organiser; may she have many years before her in which to direct the work and fortunes of the munificent endowment for the benefit of nurses, which has been entrusted to her and Dr. Bedford Fenwick—Mrs. Bedford Fenwick!

The toast was honoured with great enthusiasm, and after Mrs. Fenwick had briefly responded, a memorable and most enjoyable evening came to a conclusion with the singing of "God Save the King."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)