

## THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES' CONGRESS.

We recorded in our August issue the proceedings at the wonderful Opening Session of the Congress of the International Council of Nurses, which was convened in the Salle Pleyel, Faubourg Saint Honoré 252, Paris, on Monday, July 10th, at 9.30 a.m., at the conclusion of which a General Business Session was held, under the Chairmanship of Miss Clara D. Noyes, First Vice-President, when the Reports of the President, Mlle. L. Chaptal, the Treasurer, Miss E. M. Musson, and the Secretary, Miss C. Reimann, were presented, followed by the Reports of the Chairmen of Standing Committees.

In the afternoon at 3 o'clock the Congress settled down to the business of the Section Meetings.

It will be realised that the vast number of papers which were discussed during the Congress in Paris and Brussels cannot be published as a whole in *THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING*, nor is this necessary, because they will be printed, we may hope, in the Transactions of the Congress, which we anticipate will be on sale in the near future.

We therefore propose to publish the papers in sequence, concerning which important Resolutions were adopted by the Congress, and also those papers which were presented by members of the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain.

## TRAINING OF NURSES AS SECRETARIAL OFFICERS AND PROFESSIONAL NURSING JOURNALISTS.

BY

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### I.—SECRETARIAL OFFICERS.

"Of all the creatures, both in sea and land,  
Only to man Thou hast made known Thy ways,  
And put the pen alone into his hand,  
And made him secretary of Thy praise."

Thus wrote George Herbert nearly 300 years ago, and in so doing placed the craft of penmanship, in its various applications, on a high level of endeavour and responsibility.

With the placing of the first Nurses' Registration Act on the Statute Book, the organisation of the Nursing Profession became obligatory, a fact realised by few. Upwards of thirty years have passed since that epoch-making event, and no curriculum has yet been defined for the systematic instruction of Registered Nurses as professional organisers and administrators, and the necessity for a dual qualification as Nurse-Secretary has not yet been recognised.

To Registered Nurses of high purpose, public spirit, political instincts and legal acumen, who are debating upon the branch of Nursing Service in which their special talents and knowledge can most usefully be applied, the realisation that as Secretarial Officers they will be filling positions in a branch of professional work where initiative will find a free course for their special gifts and characteristics, should make this field for their activities attractive.

An advertisement to-day for an experienced Registered Nurse to fill a post as Ward Sister, Home Sister or Matron, will bring applications from dozens of nurses eager to obtain the vacant position, and well qualified to fill it if appointed. But should an advertisement be published for a Registered Nurse with administrative experience for the post of Secretary to a Statutory Body, a Nurses' Organisation, or in a Public Health Office, the number of candidates qualified to fill it will be limited, however exalted their position in the

Nursing World, for to discharge these duties efficiently they must have had wide social experience and Secretarial Training.

This clerical experience includes methods of correspondence, proficiency in the writing of business letters, and of letters of a persuasive character, shorthand, typing, knowledge of filing, duplicating, mimeographing, accountancy and finance, the organisation of Meetings, knowledge of procedure, the drafting of Minutes and Memoranda—no easy accomplishments—and numerous other duties which are matters of routine in a well-organised secretarial department.

These qualifications can only be attained by strenuous training and application over a prolonged period, and since doubly-qualified applicants are not forthcoming, a nurse without clerical qualifications may be nominated to a post where her deficiencies are minimised by the appointment of subordinates expert in such work—a system calculated to lower standards of discipline.

Moreover, just as Miss Nightingale claimed that the Matron should be the best qualified nurse in a hospital, so a secretarial nursing officer should, in addition to possessing high nursing qualifications and powers of organisation, be the best qualified secretary in her office. How otherwise is she to supervise, and if necessary criticise, the work of the staff which it is her duty to control?

It appears, therefore, that we should realise the lack of well-qualified nurses to fill positions such as I have indicated, pay serious attention to defining the necessary qualifications, and be observant of student nurses in order to discover those who possess orderly minds, organising capacity, and who are likely to respond to a course of Secretarial training; having done so we should inspire them with an appreciation of its importance and a desire to obtain it. Further, we should demonstrate to hospital authorities the possibility and desirability of offering opportunities to such experts.

In the Matron's Office of large hospitals there is room for clerical nurses whose dual qualifications should be of the utmost use in these departments. Such nurses might well be taken into consideration in the appointment of Matrons of hospitals, many of whom are appointed without evidence of administrative experience, in so far as clerical work and a knowledge of business are concerned.

In conclusion, it is necessary for an aspirant for a Nursing Secretarial post to possess power of accurate and expressive speech, a knowledge of foreign languages, have a taste for literature, and appreciate the value of statistics. She should have studied Nursing History, especially the records of its organisation. She should keep herself informed in public affairs, especially those of her own profession, and be an omnivorous student of the daily press. If possible, she should cultivate persons of original thought and come into touch with people of eminence in all ranks of society.

The model Nurse-Secretary should take pride in her appearance. It is not, alas! given to all to possess the indefinable gift of charm, which usually springs from a generous heart, but it is a precious asset in a secretary who by her manner and manners (by no means the same thing) can do so much to make or to mar the reputation and the popularity of the Institution or Organisation of which she is the chief executive officer.

A love of order and power to maintain discipline are essential.

To the Nurse with the necessary characteristics and qualifications the position of Secretarial Officer has many attractions, and if used aright, no position enables a woman to exercise more far-reaching influence for the benefit of the Nursing Profession than that of the Secretarial Nurse.

It only remains to define a practical curriculum for her training and efficiency, and to ensure that her dual qualifications shall receive adequate recognition and reward.

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