

Royal British Nurses' Association.

Incorporated by



Royal Charter.

THIS SUPPLEMENT BEING THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE CORPORATION.

THE ANNUAL MEETING.

The Annual Meeting of the Royal British Nurses' Association took place at 194, Queen's Gate, on Thursday, May 28th, at 3 p.m. Mrs. Bedford Fenwick was in the Chair.

The Report of the Executive Committee.

The Report of the Executive Committee was presented by Mr. Herbert J. Paterson, Hon. Medical Secretary, and dealt with many activities, most of which have been referred to already, as they arose, in our Official Organ. There were references to tasks undertaken to promote the progress of professional development and to protect privileges won for the nurses, as, for instance, the steps taken by the Executive Committee in relation to the Recommendations of the Joint Committee appointed by the County Councils Association and the Association of Municipal Authorities. This Committee, it will be remembered, was set up to investigate the best method of recruitment and training of nurses to be employed in the Public Assistance, Public Health, Mental Treatment and Education Services. The Executive Committee incorporated in its Memorandum, on the report of the Joint Committee, the Association's objection to the teaching of anatomy, physiology, hygiene and kindred subjects being divorced from the hospital curricula. The Executive Committee had expressed themselves as in agreement with the suggestion that there should be greater co-operation between the general and mental hospitals and had protested strongly against the proposal for the establishment of separate examinations by the General Nursing Council and the Royal Medico-Psychological Association, on an equal footing, as supplying standards entitling a nurse to be recognised as qualified to be entrusted with the care of patients suffering from mental disease.

Opposition had also been raised by the Executive Committee to the proposal to establish a special Nursing Service composed of nurses possessed (it is to be presumed) of inferior qualifications for the care of the chronic sick. There was also recorded the protest to the Medical and Hospitals Committee of the London County Council against certain very restrictive arrangements in connection with the nurses' hours off duty, a protest which had not been without good effect.

Lectures on a large number of subjects of professional and general interest had been held at headquarters, many and varied social activities had been promoted from the Club, and references were made to our various benevolent schemes and the efforts to develop these for the benefit of nurses suffering from illness or in straitened circumstances.

A very full report was placed before the Meeting of the action taken by one of the Members against the Association when her engagement on the Co-operation was determined by a decision of one Meeting of the Executive Committee and confirmed at a second. We have refrained in the past from giving the name of the nurse in our official organ in order to avoid prejudice for her in obtaining another appoint-

ment, but her name was stated in the Committee's Report. Full details were also given leading up to the decision that she could not longer remain on the private staff although the Committee found no fault with the manner in which she discharged her nursing duties. Particulars were given regarding the evidence which she brought to support her claim when she brought an action for wrongful dismissal against the Association in the High Courts. It was reported that, after hearing the case, the Judge said that if the plaintiff were to succeed for breach of contract she must establish the fact that the contract had been broken by the defendant Association, and the Judge stated he was satisfied that the Committee had not broken their contract, that they had a *bona-fide* case, and that good reason had been shown why they should terminate the plaintiff's engagement. He was satisfied that the Committee was properly constituted and with a sufficient quorum according to previous Minutes, directing the machinery of meetings of the Executive Committee. Their action, he said, did not involve any serious moral blame to the plaintiff. It was quite apparent that, for many years, she had caused inconvenience and difficulty by refusing to go to cases, and the Judge considered that the Secretary was amply justified in bringing the matter before the Committee, as she had said she must. It had then been left to the Committee, and the Committee did consider that due cause was shown for removing the plaintiff's name from the list of the Co-operation; the Committee, continued the Judge, did not act harshly or without due consideration. The action failed and judgment was given for the Association with costs. So ended what may be regarded as a deplorable incident between the Association and one of its Members, but no other course of action could have been taken than that which was adopted. To fail to send a nurse at a given time after undertaking to do so must inevitably involve most serious risks to the patient concerned, and once Miss Barton had entered the action, it concerned the honour of the Association that it should defend the course which it had pursued.

The adoption of the Report was moved by Mr. Paterson, with an additional Clause expressing appreciation of Miss Macdonald's valuable work for the Association.

In seconding it Miss Breay referred to the large amount of work which lay, of necessity, behind such a Report. The Chairman commented upon various items in it and gave a warning that vigilance would have to be maintained if certain privileges, won for the Registered Nurses, were not to be gradually withdrawn from them, privileges which were clearly the right of the Registered Nurses. The Rule, passed by the General Nursing Council, opening the door for others besides Medical Practitioners and Registered Nurses to teach anatomy, physiology and kindred subjects was a retrograde step and may in time affect the one portal to the Register. The Rule was a warning to the nurses to be alert in maintaining all the privileges and benefits which it was within the compass of the Acts to give to them as Members of the Nursing Profession.

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