

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES OF GREAT BRITAIN.

THE NURSING CONFERENCE

Caxton Hall, S.W.1, November 10th, 1938

Miss Helen Dey, O.B.E., R.R.C., Matron and Superintendent of Nursing, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, and President of St. Bartholomew's Hospital Nurses' League, presided at the afternoon session of the Nursing Conference on "Questions of Interest to the Nursing Profession," on November 10th, 1938, in the Great Hall, Caxton Hall, London, when the subject under discussion was dealt with in two papers by Miss G. V. Hillyers, Matron of St. Thomas's Hospital, London, Superintendent of the Nightingale Training School for Nurses, and President of the Nightingale Fellowship; and Miss A. E. Merry, Matron of the Royal Infirmary, Bradford, and President of its Nurses' League.

Miss Dey said that both Papers would first be presented and then Miss Darroch would open the Discussion, when she hoped that many of those present would take part in it.

THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF THE NURSE.

Miss G. V. Hillyers then read the following paper on "THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF THE NURSE—Its adjustment to modern requirements."

RECRUITMENT.

May I begin by reminding you that Nursing is one of the humane professions, and for them more than ability is required—you cannot be a good nurse unless you have learnt to understand human nature, and have developed a strong self-control over personality, humour and infinite compassion.

If we agree that this is *the right type of woman* that we want for our work the question arises—*how best we can obtain her!*

You may be interested to know that in 1885—twenty-five years after Miss Nightingale had founded her first Training School for Nurses, the Nightingale School received 1,500 applications for 32 vacancies. Nevertheless, there was still the same difficulty in finding the right type of candidate to make a good nurse and still more a good Sister.

History repeats itself.

For any form of recruitment it is necessary first of all to set up a standard, and if we want to obtain a girl of the calibre to which I referred above, *I think we have done well to insist on a Test Examination*, and to aim at demanding a school leaving certificate or matriculation or its equivalent.

I believe that the present day young people do not want things made too easy for them, and that the care of the sick demands a sound educational standard.

The sources from which we wish to obtain our candidates are:—

1. Secondary schools.
2. Colleges of all types.
3. Elementary schools + continuation of studies.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

The Nursing Profession can absorb so many candidates, and nowadays there are so many more fresh openings for women. Hence only a small proportion from the secondary schools have entered the nursing profession.

COLLEGES—(a) UNIVERSITY.

A certain number of candidates who have taken their degrees enter the nursing profession. If women can be encouraged to enter the Nursing Profession after taking degrees in economics, social and domestic science, etc., higher posts in connection with the welfare of the nation will be awaiting them. The Government is demanding fully-trained nurses for pioneer work in various posts in public health services, in arranging diets in schools and

hospitals, as sanitary inspectors, inspectors of midwives, etc., and will give them scope for pioneer efforts.

(b) DOMESTIC SCIENCE COLLEGES AND TECHNICAL SCHOOLS are immensely valuable, since here the practical application of knowledge is taught and put in its right perspective.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS.

Candidates from elementary schools should be encouraged to go on to secondary schools by means of educational grants; or they should continue their studies at evening classes in polytechnics and colleges. The important point is that it should be made clear to these students that it is worth while for them to continue their studies: it teaches them how to concentrate, and how to obtain a wider knowledge in subjects of world interest. It teaches them how to understand human nature, so that in the end they will be able to qualify in nursing with much less effort. This in its turn would make the training of nurses less strenuous, and the teaching much less arduous.

RECOGNITION OF EDUCATIONAL STANDARD FOR NURSES.

I think one of the happiest things that seems to shine clearly through all our troubles is *that the educational authorities are beginning to realise that nurses definitely require to be educated*, to fit them to undertake their task.

CLOSER CO-OPERATION WITH SCHOOLS.

I would like to ask for a closer co-operation between the headmistresses and teachers of our schools, and the Matrons and Sister Tutors of our hospitals, as I believe there would be a great gain on both sides. For example, a headmistress may think that tidiness need not be greatly stressed for the young girl in comparison with the acquirement of knowledge. *We find that it matters very much*, and will mean all the difference between comfort and discomfort to the helpless patient, and may even cause lack of confidence. The academic side is naturally all-important to the headmistress, but the nurse needs to be taught how to *apply knowledge*, and to observe phenomena for herself, and record her observations.

EXPENSE OF EDUCATION.

All education costs money—and that is exactly where the shoe pinches; but if a thing is worth while, means of carrying it through are generally found.

If we have the co-operation of the headmistresses, and they will explain to the girl and to the parents the need for every student to remain at school longer, I am convinced that the parents will in many cases be prepared to keep their daughters at school for the longer period. Possibly grants from the Board of Education can be arranged for such opportunities.

APPOINTMENT OF CAREERS MISTRESSES.

It is most interesting to note that various schools have appointed careers mistresses, and contact with these, through the Students Careers Association, should be a valuable link to hospitals for recruitment.

Although I have stressed the value of remaining at school, I would like you to know that one realises that there is a certain type of girl who will never find her outlet in school life, but who looks for the *opportunity of development more on the practical side*. Here the value of technical and domestic science colleges is invaluable, and gives a splendid preparation for nursing.

AGE OF ENTRY.

Nineteen to 30 or 32. This ensures maturity and some experience of life. I still think that 21-22 is the ideal age, but we have had to fix it at 19, as otherwise, in the changed conditions of the world to-day, these young people enter other professions and are lost to us permanently.

Looked at from the student's point of view, I think it is most important that young girls should be surrounded by sound and healthy people, whilst they are on the verge of

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