

## THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF NURSING.

### AN OPEN MEETING.

An Open Meeting was held by the Royal College of Nursing at the Cowdray Hall on Saturday, November 15th, at 2.30 p.m., to discuss "The Basic Training of Nurses in Relation to Post-War Reconstruction of the Nursing Profession."

Miss I. H. Charley, Chairman of the Public Health Section of the College, was in the Chair, and introduced the five special speakers who were on the platform, and read short Papers on various subjects.

Miss L. Pearson, Sister Tutor, Humberstone Mental Hospital, spoke on Mental Nursing; Miss Calder on Nursing Education; Miss M. Gould, Sister Tutor of St. Thomas's Hospital, London, from the point of view of General Nursing; Miss Ashby, for the Essex Scheme for Training Assistant Nurses and Care of the Chronic Sick; and Miss G. B. Carter, an advocate for a Scheme for two grades of Registered Nurses, supported this principle.

Possibly the ambiguous wording of the subject-title was responsible for the fact that nothing of basic constructive value was put forward from the platform. The speech of Miss Ashby, on the Assistant Nurse, aroused animated discussion.

Speaking on the Registration of Assistant Nurses, Miss Ashby said it was the avowed policy of the Royal College of Nursing to register Assistant Nurses. She then went on in support of her argument to describe prevailing conditions in hospitals and institutions for the chronic sick, and stated that State Registered Nurses did not care to work in these institutions, which she described as, in some cases, insanitary and grim in the extreme, owing to shortage of money and staff, unsuitable accommodation, and no resident medical officer. She then described the type of woman available for nursing these unfortunate people. She described them as being, in some cases, too old, not in sufficiently good health, and mentally unable to pass a State examination, but they would have to be given a certain amount of training and be registered.

Miss G. M. Hardy, D.N. (Lond.), Matron of the Battersea General Hospital, made the rousing speech of the afternoon. She said she had attended the meeting to protest against the College policy of legally registering the semi-trained Assistant Nurse in association with the efficiently-qualified woman, and that after hearing Miss Ashby's description of these dreadful places for housing the chronic sick poor, she was more than ever against the College policy. She said that if such grim and dreadful places existed they were a blot on public health organisation, and as such should be abolished; and added that if the women engaged to attend these poor people were too old, not in good health, and mentally incapable of passing examinations, they, too, should be abolished without delay. To compile a Roll of such persons in competition with the highly-qualified Registered Nurse would be disastrous both for the sick poor and the Nursing Profession; indeed, such action would result in Nursing as a profession ceasing to exist.

Miss Hardy then reminded the audience of the financial position of the question and stressed the fact that the Registered Nurses had since the inauguration of their Governing Body, the General Nursing Council, by Act of Parliament, spent £750,000 in building up their profession and publishing the Register of Nurses, as they were entirely responsible, under the Nurses' Registration Act, for the financial stability of the General Nursing Council. The Treasury had not contributed a penny. The registration of the semi-trained Assistant Nurse would result in cheap competition with the qualified nurse in the open market and

meant ruin. Educated women would cease to become nurses.

Miss Hardy was then reminded by the Chair that her time limit of three minutes was up, and upon resuming her seat, there was loud and sympathetic applause from all parts of the hall, and others present spoke in support of her views.

### The Resolutions.

Miss Griffiths then asked the Chair if Resolutions were in order, to which the Chair replied in the affirmative.

A Resolution concerning the construction of the Register was submitted and voted upon.

A second Resolution, presented through the Chair, to the effect that the Royal College of Nursing should set up "An Experimental School of Nursing" was interrupted by Miss F. M. Goodall, Secretary of the Royal College of Nursing, whilst the count was being taken, who stated that she did not think that a vote should be taken on the resolution as those present had not had time to consider such an important matter. This irregular interruption caused some consternation throughout the audience.

After a certain amount of agitated discussion on the platform, the Chair agreed the Resolution was in order, and directed the count should be continued.

Miss Goodall again interrupted the proceedings and maintained that the Resolution should not be put to the vote, and summarily adjourned the meeting until January next.

Miss Hardy protested that as it was an open meeting and the Resolution had been considered in order by the Chair and submitted by her to the meeting—the votes for it having been taken—those against should also be permitted to vote and the result declared.

The meeting broke up in some confusion—several persons unknown to Miss Hardy expressing thanks, shaking her by the hand.

The more open meetings of nurses to discuss these questions of vital importance to the profession and the public, the better.

What we have to keep in view are:—

- (1) The needs of the sick, *skilled* nursing for all classes without fear or favour;
- (2) Justice to the Nursing Profession to enable its members to do their duty in the body politic;
- (3) A united effort upon the part of Registered Nurses who pay the piper to call the tune, no Control with a big C by public employers.

### THE RECONSTRUCTION COMMITTEE OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF NURSING.

A meeting of the Nursing Reconstruction Committee of the Royal College of Nursing was held in London, on Monday, November 24th, when Lord Horder, the Chairman, expressed the opinion that the prospects of Nursing as a livelihood were still not good enough to attract women of ability. The purpose of the Committee was to produce a better national service. The four following sub-committees were appointed:—

1. An Assistant Nurses' Committee to deal with those who are not State Registered;
  - (2) a recruitment committee;
  - (3) a committee to deal with scales of pay and conditions of service;
  - (4) a committee to look after education and training.
- The purpose of the Committee, as stated by Lord Horder, will no doubt receive sympathy, but unless the first-named sub-committee decides to eliminate legal recognition of the illiterate Assistant Nurse from its programme, it is hopeless to expect educated and conscientious young women of ability to enter a service for training in competition with them. We realise that the apathy of many Registered Nurses is the cause why "superior persons" class them as fools, but the well-educated girl of to-day is

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