

NURSING ECHOES.

The First Report of the Nurses' Salaries Committee, recently published, will be warmly welcomed by Registered Nurses and Student Nurses, and they are to be congratulated that substantial increase has been made all along the line, although the standard for Ward Sisters is quite inadequate. The increased cost of a couple of millions is inconsiderable where National expenditure is concerned. We advise careful investment, which will result in independence in the future; restricted salaries have deprived many nurses of the delight of freedom in the past.

The pamphlet issued by the Council of the British College of Nurses, Ltd., demanding justice for the State Registered Nurse, is meeting with a very encouraging reception from people of all classes, and the first 500 copies were soon sold out, or distributed. Business men are specially interested in its financial statement on page 16, and agree that as the Registered Nurses finance their own professional governing body—the General Nursing Council—no Government Department has any right to commandeer their Headquarters and staff, to degrade their professional standards. Ministries of Health, and of Labour, please take note.

Anyway, our best policy is to push the pamphlet for all it is worth, price 6d. to Fellows and Members of the British College of Nurses, Ltd., and 1s. to the public.

There appear to be congratulations from high quarters as to the standard of health of the nation. Well and good, but those of us with an educated eye would utter a word of warning concerning the nervous system of women and girls. We are now in the fourth year of the war, and the strain is beginning to be evident amongst women and girls. This should be recognised and extra care be forthcoming. The home life of women owing to lack of service, is a terrible physical strain, to say nothing of the strain on their heart-strings with sons and husbands facing death daily—and our young girls are finding long hours in factories beginning to tell on them. Good food and warmth are daily needs. Impress upon them that flimsy clothes, including thin, porous shoes and stockings, are no protection against chills which may develop into serious illness, through which tuberculosis may result. The shortage of fuel, which should never have arisen but for lack of forethought by responsible persons in high places, is causing the old very serious suffering. The sight of glistening flames and a hot glow is now the greatest treat many old people enjoy, and that but seldom.

We find a note of apprehension in many papers of late concerning our voluntary hospitals in connection with the Beveridge new plan of social service, and those of us who have worked in, and approve them, would do well to keep a vigilant eye on future organisation, especially in so far as their nursing schools are concerned.

We note that, speaking recently at the Aberdeen District Nursing Association, Professor R. S. Aitken expressed the opinion that nursing associations, instead

of being wiped out of existence as some people feared, would be built into the new plan of social services proposed in the Beveridge Report. Some might have been tempted to think, said Professor Aitken, that the Beveridge Report would sound the deathknell of the Queen's Institute of District Nursing, the Nursing Associations and many other charities. But had they ever stopped to ask why the services rendered by these associations had been necessary?

Were they in the least concerned why so-and-so was poor and required nursing help, and could not pay for it? No, they were quite satisfied, and rightly satisfied, with the fact that the need existed, and they had the opportunity to meet it. It seemed that the Beveridge Report was the natural result of the work which had been done by the Queen's Institute and hundreds of other similar organisations during the past 50 years.

At a recent meeting of the London County Council Sir Alfred Baker was elected Chairman. Let us hope he will keep in touch with its nursing department, which employs hundreds of nurses whose conditions might be improved if the Matrons were permitted to exercise their individuality, which, under the present regime, they are not.

Estimates for the coming year were submitted. Total gross expenditure on rate account was put at £40,947,540, to which £1,500,000 was added for contingencies, making £42,447,540. Of this £19,664,020 is to be met from receipts in aid and Exchequer grants; £4,373,020 from balances, and the balance of £18,410,500 from rates.

Evidently, with this huge income there is no excuse whatever for decreasing the cost of the School Nursing Service.

The Assistant Nurse is up and doing. She is taking no risks by waiting for the termination of war before securing desirable posts. We hear of a County Medical Officer having appointed an Assistant Nurse, with six months' experience, to a good post with a salary of £200 a year and emoluments—a position which many Registered Nurses would have appreciated.

And again, an Assistant Nurse is running for profit a nursing home for old invalids—only one member of the nursing staff is registered.

For private cases we hear of £5 5s. 0d. a week being charged.

The terrible shortage of women workers in the majority of hospitals and institutions for the sick makes it imperative to employ Assistant Nurses, so we are informed by advertisers. No chance whatever of obtaining educated girls as student nurses in many Public Assistance hospitals.

"The truth is," one matron writes, "few girls want to bind themselves for three or four years at this crisis—they hope to marry."

We don't blame them for that, the more happy marriages the better for the country in the future; but every effort should be made to protect standards of nursing and make it worth while for those who have a vocation to enjoy it—as they have done in the past.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)