

Testrup High School. A Pre-Nursing School in Denmark.

DURING the fortnight's Study Course organised by the Danish Council of Nurses in Denmark prior to the International Conference in Sweden, some of us were privileged to spend two days at Testrup High School. This School is one of four owned by the Danish Council of Nurses and is run on the same lines as the Danish Folk High Schools as a Pre-Nursing Course.

To understand what makes Testrup more than just another Pre-Nursing Course, it is necessary to know something of the Danish Folk High School Movement. This is a form of adult education, founded by Bishop Grundtvig in 1844 to supplement the very limited education available to children then. None under the age of 18 years could be admitted because he believed that only those who had worked were ready to benefit from his courses. It was not his aim to cram the people with facts but to awaken in themselves the desire to seek for knowledge and to broaden their outlook culturally. The idea was taken up and perfected by Kristen Kold, who has been described as "a sort of rustic blend of Socrates and Pestalozzi". He set the pattern for the schools to which they still adhere. The movement rapidly gained hold and in less than 30 years there were fifty-four Schools opened in Denmark and some in Norway, Sweden and Finland. The Schools are residential and the students enrol for Courses of five months duration in the summer or winter. They are all privately owned but receive State Grants. The subjects taken were not intended, originally, to be vocational, but purely informative and cultural. There are now, however, a few schools like Testrup which are vocational. The experience, in adult education and the development of personality, gained through more than 100 years of practice, is available to the students of the Pre-Nursing Course, which has, as it were, been grafted on to this background and tradition. Herein lies the essential difference between Testrup and our own Pre-Nursing Courses.

Testrup School was built as a Folk High School, and in the garden stands a memorial to the two pioneers and also one erected in 1921 to commemorate the regaining of Schleswig Holstein. The Danish Council of Nurses bought it in 1927 and opened it as a Pre-Nursing School. It stands in a village about 8 miles from Aarhus, the capital of Jutland. With its charmingly rural surroundings and Manor House appearance the school has all the cultural advantages of atmosphere, to which in no small way Oswald, their tame young owl, contributes. It has also the healthful advantages which come from an open air life and the garden produce from the well-stocked kitchen gardens. It would need a far more practised pen than mine to describe adequately the charm and atmosphere of this school since these are due, not only to the setting, but in a large part to the personalities of Miss Grosen and Miss Kaae who run it.

It is an undoubted advantage in this form of Pre-Nursing education that the students are resident with their tutors, so that they gain not only the necessary knowledge, but learn also to adjust themselves to living in a community before they enter a hospital. The tolerance and understanding they receive and the individual help given over their special difficulties must be of inestimable benefit to the students at Testrup, and indeed their enthusiasm for their work showed their appreciation of their teachers. Women who had never left home before were learning the give and take necessary in communal life. At Testrup it is customary for the students to entertain the staff, and vice versa, one evening each week alternately. During our visit a delightful entertainment of music and miming was given in the evening by the students. It was carried out in the happiest spirit of comradeship and highly reminiscent of some of the less sophisticated Nurses'

Parties we had all attended at one time or another. This close contact of tutor and student in both work and leisure makes possible a much more accurate assessment of character as well as ability, particularly from the standpoint of a nurse's training. These assessments and records drawn up by the teaching staff, who were appointed by the Danish Council of Nurses and consist of both trained nurses and Folk High School teachers, are sent to the hospitals to which the students apply for training and must be most helpful to them. It is claimed by the school authorities that they not only help to bridge the gap but also that some wastage of student nurses is avoided by the weeding out of unsuitable candidates during these five months. Those found unsuitable are advised to take up other work.

The students are accepted for the course from the age of about 19½ (it must be remembered that the entrance age for Danish Hospitals Training Schools is 20-21). Older women can also join, at least one to whom we spoke was over 30 years. They are recruited from both elementary and secondary schools. There is no obligation for them to go on to a nurse's training, nor is there a time limit between completing the course and entering hospitals. As there is no equivalent to our State Examinations for nurses they are not able to take any part of their qualifying examinations.

Few of the provincial hospitals have Preliminary Training Schools, so these students are greatly in demand for these hospitals, in others they pass through a shortened P.T.S. course.

The five-month Testrup course costs 750 Kr. (about £54) in summer and 800 Kr. (about £57) in winter. But there are many grants available for necessitous students, both from State and County Funds.

The day begins at 8 a.m. with morning prayer and the students then scatter to their classrooms, theoretical or practical gymnasium according to their time-table. Classes continue without a break until 12 mid-day when they stop for 2½ hours for dinner and a rest period. They continue again until 4.30 p.m. when they have an hour's study period and then an hour for reading or handwork. Handwork is a feature of the Folk High Schools and we saw lovely specimens of their embroidery and weaving in the curtains and cushions of the students' drawing room and in book covers and tablecloths in their bedrooms. As in all Folk High Schools each period starts with the singing of a Danish Folk Song. The zest and vigour with which the classes and teachers sang their charming songs bore witness to the efficiency of this method of waking up a class and breaking down barriers. How stimulating it must be for the teachers to start off with a classroom full of sparkling eyes and animated faces.

The curriculum which, as this is a Folk High School, must cover certain general subjects is catholic as well as specialised, as this syllabus shows:—

- Nursing Theory—60 hours. Set essays—10 hours.
- Practical Nursing—60 hours.
- Hygiene—10 hours.
- Bacteriology—10 hours.
- Physics—15 hours.
- Chemistry and teaching in Nutrition—40 hours.
- Anatomy and Physiology—66 hours.
- Set essays—10 hours.
- Demonstrations in invalid cooking—12 hours.
- Arithmetic, related to nursing theory—60 hours.
- Danish—100 hours.
- Social Knowledge—20 hours.
- Art needlework—20 hours.
- Gymnastics—60 hours.
- History of Nursing and Ethics—40 hours.
- Teaching in Heredity—6 hours.
- Subjects in relation to Hygiene and Bacteriology—5 hours.
- Psychology—30 hours.
- History, World and Denmark—40 hours.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)