

## “Dear Octopus.”

FROM WHAT WE HAVE HEARD of the history of “Moorfields,” it has always been the custom of the combined medical and nursing staff to present an annual play, namely at Christmas time. This year the tradition was carried on for yet another time.

After looking through several likely plays, remembering we are curbed by scenery and numbers, our final choice was “Dear Octopus,” by Dodie Smith. The play is a popular one, and no doubt most people have either seen it on the stage or screen, or else heard it broadcast by the B.B.C. It is a comedy of English family life.

The parts were cast and rehearsals began early in November. Bad luck dogged our footsteps well into December, with the indisposition of members of the cast, for various reasons. Then our luck changed and the play began to take on a recognisable form, but even then two members had to be replaced at very short notice. The rehearsals went ahead with great enthusiasm, and were not without their hilarious mishaps. These rehearsals became more frequent as time became shorter—and tempers even shorter still.

The date of the dress rehearsal arrived and the cast was surprised at the suitability of the costumes, and the ingenuity of the stage “props” for such a small stage. All too soon the fateful night arrived. The tentacles of the Octopus, standing off-stage before the raising of the curtain, were filled with more than a little foreboding, and all felt a momentary attack of stage-fright. The curtain rose, and once out in front of the lights, with a friendly and receptive audience, fears were soon dispelled.

“Aunt Belle,” although only eighteen years of age, spanned the sixty years separating her from the original character, with the aid of several concentrated auburn rinses, and at least half a stick of eyebrow black. Rather plump and dressed in a light grey costume, “mutton dressed as lamb” was the phrase indeed! “Charles,” the eldest tentacle bore his eighty years with great dignity, if a little weighed down by liberal sprinklings of flour in his golden hair. “Kenneth” hurried on to the stage minus his make-up, and rushed into impromptu lines which threw the cast into confusion, much to the amusement of the audience. Owing to his re-occurring absentmindedness, he waltzed into the middle of the second act with his ophthalmoscope prominently displayed in his jacket pocket, much to the delight of the nurses and onlookers.

It would take too long to describe the merits and little *faux-pas* of all the tentacles, but it is sufficient to say that they brought out all the high-lights in the characters they were portraying. The play closed leaving the audience, judging by the depth of the applause, well pleased with the performance, and the cast a little overwhelmed by its success.

R. M. KEYES.

J. CHAFFEY.

(Second Year Nurses).

## News from Northern Ireland.

The Northern Ireland Minister of Health and Local Government (Dame Dehra Parker, O.B.E.) recently opened the Sir Thomas and Lady Edith Dixon Convalescent Hospital at Cairndhu, near Larne. Cairndhu was formerly the home of Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon who generously presented the house and a large area of adjacent land for the purpose of a hospital for convalescent patients.

“This hospital,” said Dame Dehra, “is the first convalescent hospital of its kind in Northern Ireland. As well as providing a home and hospital combined, which should prove an inestimable benefit to members of the general public who are recovering from serious illness, this building will also be a constant reminder of the generosity and public spirit of two of Northern Ireland’s leading citizens—Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon,

## National Council of Women of Great Britain.

### Harrogate Conference, 1949.

THE Harrogate Conference of the National Council of Women of Great Britain and Northern Ireland started with a reception at the Harrogate Hydro. The reception was well attended and it gave delegates a wonderful opportunity of meeting each other and renewing old acquaintanceships.

Wednesday, 19th October.

#### FIRST SESSION.

Civic Welcome by The Worshipful Lord Mayor of Harrogate.

Greetings to Delegates by the Harrogate Branch President.

Loyal Message to Their Majesties.

Presidential Address.

Election Results:—

*President*: Mrs. Florence Earengy.

*Hon. Treasurer*: Mrs. Cadbury.

*Hon. Parliamentary Secretary*: Mrs. C. Joliffe.

The Annual Report was adopted.

#### RE-AFFIRMATION OF POLICY

The Council was asked to re-affirm its policy: That an occupational rate of wages, irrespective of the sex of the worker, be adopted.

That peeresses should be admitted, in their own right, to the House of Lords and in any reformed second chamber without differentiation between men and women.

#### HOUSING

- (a) In view of the distress and hardships still being experienced by families of all income groups and the evidence which traces so many sociological problems to lack of adequate housing accommodation, the National Council of Women in Conference assembled, in support of its Memorandum and subsequent correspondence with the Minister of Health, desired to impress upon the Government the importance of maintaining the housing programme at not less than 240,000 houses per annum.
- (b) In order to economise national and local government finance and to maintain freedom of choice for the individual, the National Council of Women further urges that the quota of new houses permitted for purchase be increased to 50 per cent.
- (c) That the building industry be given more freedom to explore the possibility of lowering costs while maintaining minimum standards.

Thursday, 20th October.

#### MORNING SESSION.

##### RESOLUTION 3. THE DELINQUENT MOTHER AND HER CHILD.

The National Council of Women deplore the imprisonment of mothers convicted of neglecting their children, recognising that such action completes the break-up of family life and in no way improves the true quality of motherhood.

The National Council of Women asks His Majesty’s Government to encourage schemes by providing maintenance grants where these women (accompanied by their younger children) would be trained in home-craft and child-care and thus given a chance to become better mothers and responsible citizens.

Carried unanimously.

##### RESOLUTION “B” FROM EXECUTIVE. DOMICILE.

The National Council of Women in Conference assembled urges His Majesty’s Government to introduce legislation to amend the law of Domicile as it relates to women.

Carried unanimously.

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