

SOME ADVANTAGES OF JOINING THE TRAINED NURSES' ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

By MISS C. R. MILL, *President of the Trained Nurses' Association of India 1914-15; Lady Superintendent, St. George's Hospital, Bombay. Paper read at the Conference of the Association of Nursing Superintendents of India, held at Agra on 8th and 9th December 1909.*

[*This paper marked the birth of the Trained Nurses' Association of India. Ed.*]

At the last Annual Conference of the Association of "Nursing Superintendents of India" the formation of a "Trained Nurses' Association of India" was taken into consideration, having for its object:

- (1) The upholding in every way of the dignity and honour of our Profession;
- (2) The promotion of *esprit de corps* amongst its Nurses;
- (3) The enabling of its members to take counsel together on matters affecting their Profession.

I have now been invited to give a short paper on the advantages to Nurses of joining this Association.

In thinking the matter over, it almost seems to me that the advantages are so obvious even to the most casual observer, that they "go without saying". I shall try, however, to explain a few points in connection with this Association.

This "Trained Nurses' Association of India" will be, I hope, (although on a very small scale), what the "International Council of Nurses" is on a large one; but ten years ago it also had a beginning, and now as Miss Dock writes: "After ten years of planning, planting, digging and tending, the fair tree of our 'International Council of Nurses' is now well grown and strong, with seven sturdy branches—an object of joy to those who have waited long and hopefully to see it grow." There are now nearly 25,000 members in this Council, and when one reads of its wonderful Congress held last July in London, to which delegates from not only the United Kingdom but from the United States of America, Germany, Holland, Denmark, Finland and Canada went (there were none from India), it should fill us with encouragement, and with the hope that in the future, we, or those who succeed us, may become a branch of this same Council, deriving benefits from it and giving, let us hope, benefits in return.*

I think that if we are to uphold the dignity of our Profession, we must combine together and help one another. "In unity is strength", and we all know that what takes years to accomplish where numbers are few, is quickly done when many, with one object in view, work together.

Our Profession—how we all love it! or if we don't, then we have no right to belong to it. We are jealous of its good name, and we are up in arms at once if an outsider dares to say a word against it.

We all know how, when perhaps we have been feeling alone amongst strangers, we hear it said of someone near, "She is a

*The Trained Nurses' Association of India was affiliated with the International Council of Nurses in 1912.

Nurse"; how the words act like a charm, it is like an "open sesame" in our hearts, and we feel that we are in sympathy with at least one of the company. And yet although we feel like this, and although we would gladly deny ourselves many things for the sake of our Profession, we are not always careful in upholding its dignity, we are often careless, and thoughtless, and we forget.

But if all fully trained Nurses in India, were to belong to one big Association, our names being enrolled as members, surely it ought to make us more careful in our conduct, more zealous, more enthusiastic, and more eager to get others to join. In speaking to you of the dignity and honour of our Profession I cannot do better than quote part of Mrs. Bedford Fenwick's address of welcome at the opening of the Nursing Congress. She said:

"We Nurses, unlike the members of many other Professions, are happily untroubled by national considerations. Our work stands apart from every influence, excepting that which promotes the health, and therefore in a large measure the happiness, of the peoples of the world. . . . It is our good fortune that while others concern themselves with matters of high policy, and may have recourse to force of arms, under no circumstances can the sick and wounded be our enemies. War to the death cannot affect the primary duty of the trained Nurse; wherever the sick have need of us, it is our duty to serve them, and we can do so the more effectively because there is no nationality in Nursing.

"A Profession of such fine ideals and far-reaching influence, must be formed of the finest human materials. We need the very flower of womanhood to maintain these ideals. In the near future I predict that only those can hope to excel in our Profession who possess refined and cultured breeding, a liberal education, vigorous physical energy, noble qualities of mind, deep wellsprings of human sympathy, gracious manners, a sensitive public spirit, and a splendid conviction of right."

Surely then Nursing is a Profession worth belonging to, and surely it is worth our while to do our best to uphold its honour and dignity.

The second object is to promote *esprit de corps* amongst the members. Now it is a fact that this spirit exists, but in India it is so hidden away that sometimes one is tempted to ask, "Is it really there?" In England it is much more perceptible, but there are reasons for that. In England Nurses are in such large numbers, they have so much to encourage them, so many well-known people take an interest in them, from Their Most Gracious Majesties the King and Queen, downwards.

In hospitals they are now studied in every possible way. Nursing is being made less arduous and more of a science every year. Nurses are provided with different forms of amusement when off duty; tennis courts, swimming baths, libraries, etc. abound. Nurses as a body are respected and honoured by everyone.

One has only to read the accounts of the Nursing Congress, to gain some idea of this—the King takes an interest in the proceedings, the Secretary of State for War addresses a meeting, the Nurses are entertained by the Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress at the Mansion House, Lord Amphill, G.C.S.I., presides at a banquet given by the

members of the International Council of Nurses, and so on. Oh, yes, it is easier to be imbued with *esprit de corps* at home. Out here Nurses labour under difficulties. The number of fully trained Nurses (by fully trained I mean those possessing a certificate of at least three years training) is comparatively small. Many of them do not have opportunities of mixing with other Nurses and so keeping alive interests that are apt to flag. They work in isolated districts, perhaps far away from other trained Nurses, and they in fact lose touch with their sisters in the Profession. Besides this, we see women who have been rejected in our good training schools, and who by their attempted nursing and conduct bring discredit on our Profession, passing themselves off as trained Nurses, and thus imposing on the general public and drawing fees which they have no right to receive.

With a few exceptions, such as that shown by Her Excellency Lady Minto, there is not nearly the same amount of interest taken in Nurses in India as there is at home, and in many instances Nurses appear to be looked upon as necessary evils, patients and their friends being quite surprised when they turn out to be real comforts in the house. Perhaps Nurses have themselves to blame for this; let us try to alter this impression, if, indeed, it really exists. Although in all this there is no real excuse for our having less of this feeling of *esprit de corps*, I say that it is much more difficult to maintain, and it requires more effort to cultivate, and to make it influence our conduct in dealing with one another.

An Association of trained Nurses in India ought also to foster a spirit of unswerving loyalty in our midst. This is specially required.

The third object in forming this Association is the enabling of the members to take counsel together at stated intervals on matters affecting their Profession. This is very necessary. "As iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." We are not working selfishly on our own account, but shall belong to a great Community, of which if one member suffers all the other members ought to suffer too.

As one glances over the proceedings of the great Congress in July last, we see that all sorts of subjects were discussed. State Registration (so eagerly looked for by thousands of Nurses), Mental Nursing, Morality and Public Health, Nursing in Asylums and in Prisons, etc.

It is not only this discussion of professional matters and of business one thinks of at a Conference, it is the meeting together, the exchanging of experiences, the mutual help and encouragement one derives from personal contact, that do one good; and afterwards when we are hard at work, often working under great difficulties and away in lonely places, the remembrance of those meetings will come back to us, and feeling that we are not working alone, but that we are really members of a recognised body, and that it makes all the difference to others as well as to ourselves whether we do good work or whether we do work that is indifferent, we shall take courage and go on. I can already imagine the Nurses saying: "Oh, but here in India the distances are so great and travelling expenses cost so much." At the International Congress held in London, delegates came from America, Germany, Holland, Denmark, Finland and Canada. Shall we be less enterprising than they?

If we join the Association, we must help it on as far as we possibly can. "Where there is a will", there generally "is a way", (I have noticed that this is very much so in the case of Nurses), so when a Conference is arranged for (at some trouble to those who have to do with it), try to attend it. It will not take long off your holiday, and railway companies are very kind in granting concessions.

In her Editorial in the *British Journal of Nursing* on "Conclusions of the Congress", Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, in reference to the work of a Nurse in the future, says: "Such work, if it is to be most effective, cannot be individual and isolated, but must be shared with others, for, while individual action is limited in extent, co-operative action is strong and forceful."

Let us then take courage, and let us hope that while every trained Nurse tries her utmost to get other trained Nurses to join our Association, the day will soon come when the Trained Nurses of India will be known all the world over for the high professional standard they set up for themselves, and for their unselfish labour for all who suffer.

"If thou art blest,

Then let the sunshine of thy gladness rest

On the dark edge of each cloud that lies

Black in thy brothers' skies."

THE NURSES OF INDIA AMBULANCE FUND

		Rs.	A.	P.
Amount published in October JOURNAL	...	2,484	3	9
Per Miss Rabbitt, Nursing Staff, Mayo Hospital, Nagpur		70	0	0
„ Mr. H. Hussain, St. John Ambulance Association and				
Indian Red Cross Society Branch, Mussoorie		200	0	0
From Miss E. Burnett, Bombay	...	2	0	0
Per Mrs. K. M. Newham:				
Miss Priscillamma	...	5	0	0
Sister Tomkinson, Kastur, Mysore State		20	0	0
Mrs. Newham, Bangalore	...	15	0	0
		40	0	0
„ Miss Goostrey, Medak and Karim Nagar Nursing Staff		60	0	0
„ Miss E. I. Jacob, Nursing Staff,				
Medical College Hospital, Calcutta		65	0	0
From Staff of Lady Hardinge Hospital, New Delhi		140	0	0
From members in the United Provinces, through the				
S.N.A. Units of the Thomason and Lady				
Lyall Hospitals	...	200	0	0
		3,261	3	9

The Branch Secretary of the United Provinces wishes to thank the Provincial Secretary, Miss W. E. Biddulph, and two members, Misses Oliver and O'Brien, for their co-operation in selling large numbers of eight-anna Doll Raffle tickets in their stations. The lucky drawer was Probationer Nurse A. M. Daley, Thomason Hospital, Agra. Rs.200 was collected in this way, by the S.N.A. Units of Thomason and Lady Lyall Hospitals, Agra, towards the Ambulance Fund.