

DISCUSSION.

In opening the discussion on the work of midwives and maternity nurses, Miss Amy Hughes (London) dwelt especially on the great need for trained maternity nurses in country districts, and spoke from personal experience of cases of grievous neglect and ignorant treatment. One poor woman was left for eleven days untouched, and when the trained midwife whom the patient herself had begged might be sent for came, she found her in a state of collapse. Several neighbours were in the room who had come in through curiosity to see how the nurse would get the patient up, being of opinion that she was giving way, and "ought to have been up on the ninth day." She died two days later, leaving three little children to the care (?) of a drunken father. Miss Hughes also spoke of the fatalism displayed by ignorant Gamps, this kind of remark been frequently heard, "Well, if her time's come its come, and nobody can do nothing," to which she, herself, once replied: "Her time will *not* come if you will send for the doctor immediately." The dislike to call in medical aid is in Miss Hughes experience a characteristic of untrained midwives. The chief points which she urged were longer training, even for those maternity nurses who *are* trained and hold the diploma of the London Obstetrical Society, three months being all too little; and longer and more thorough training for the "village" nurse as distinct from the maternity nurse.

The question was asked by Miss Gardner, Matron of Norwich Isolation Hospital, whether the hospitals would give a longer term of training, say six months, for the same fee that is now charged for three months? She felt very strongly that three months was inadequate. At the end of that time the pupil was apt to feel, to use an ambitious comparison, like Sir Isaac Newton "on the shore of a vast ocean of knowledge." Yet the cost of training in midwifery was, considering the social status and means of those who usually trained, considerable. The fee at the principal London hospitals, varies from 20 to 25 guineas, which does not represent the entire cost to the pupil. There is also the examination fee, books, the expensive white uniform, &c. Those who qualified in midwifery were either trained nurses, who took it as part of the general curriculum, or women who intended to practise as Midwives simply, among the poor. Neither nurses nor midwives, as a rule, possess large means, therefore, a double fee could hardly be borne. On the other hand, the hospitals would suffer a monetary loss by increasing the term of training without increasing the fee.

A lady from the delegates platform replied, that if the Midwives' Bill were passed, its promoters hoped to utilise the large amount of teaching material to be found in our workhouse infirmaries, and in that way to train at less cost.

Mrs. Redford (London) of the Midwives' Institute, dwelt strongly on the necessity for legislation, saying emphatically several times, "We *must* have legislation." She came forward twice subsequently to explain the Bill, which is to be brought forward next Session, under the title of the Licensing Bill.

Two ladies spoke in favour of the Gamps. One Miss Hinds Howell, a well known Norfolk lady, said that in her own parish much care, kindness and attention was shown to women in childbirth by the old women, the village Gamps. Only one case of death (to the mother) occurred in 30 years, and on that occasion her father, Canon Hinds Howell

ordered an inquest, saying that no woman ought to die at such a time. (But healthy surroundings count for much in maternity, as in other cases, and perhaps this was one of those salubrious villages where, as tradition has it, the doctor said, "a man can neither live nor die here!")

More valuable, as expert evidence was the testimony of a trained midwife from Yarmouth, who also spoke of good work done by many untrained old women. With a pathetic little inflection of the voice she said, "They do their best." She also affirmed that the poor women *did* appreciate cleanliness (the contrary having been stated by Miss Hughes as her experience) only you must proceed cautiously. You must not "dash the water at them." A useful hint which nurses might note.

She remarked that Yarmouth, although but a small town, contains very dark and narrow slums, and the nurse had, therefore, probably worked under the most difficult conditions.

Miss Bromley gave an account of village maternity nursing under the County Council in Shropshire, and testified to the readiness with which the nurses were welcomed by doctors, and the general public. Her report was altogether *couleur de rose*. The drift of the entire discussion was in favour of longer training and legislation.

The Red Cross Society.

THE following letter has been received by Lord Wantage, the Chairman of the Council of the English Red Cross Society, from Surgeon-General W. Taylor, the Principal Medical Officer with the Forces in Egypt:

Cairo, 16th Oct., 1898.

"DEAR LORD WANTAGE,

Having come down in the *Mayflower* on her last trip from Assouan, I feel I cannot let a mail go out without writing to thank you, and through you, the National Aid Society, for the great assistance given to the Army Medical Service in bringing back the sick and wounded from the Soudan. I have written an official expression of my opinion of the great benefit and comfort the poor fellows, officers and soldiers, obtained by being saved from the trying railway journey from Assouan to Cairo. I have not a doubt that several lives were saved by that, and I am quite sure the convalescence of many was hastened and made safe by the comfortable pleasant river trip.

Colonel Young deserves all praise for the courteous and kind way in which he worked in harmony with the officers and men of the Royal Army Medical Corps. Personally I feel very deeply indebted to you for the invaluable help given to the medical service in the way I have mentioned, and I beg you to accept my sincere thanks for having enabled me to transport such a number of the sick, and all the wounded in such comfort.

I am, yours very truly,
(Signed) W. TAYLOR,

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)