

Irish Nurses' Association.

FORMATION OF THE ULSTER BRANCH.

A meeting of nurses was held by the kind permission of President Hamilton, in Queen's College, Belfast, on January 31st, with the object of forming an Ulster Branch of the Irish Nurses' Association. Miss Duffin presided, and the attendance, which was encouragingly large and sympathetic, included Miss Huxley, Dublin, past President of the Association, who came specially to address the meeting. Several letters of apology were read, and amongst them was one from Lady Hermione Blackwood, who had been largely instrumental in arousing interest in the matter, who was unable to be present owing to illness.

Miss Workman, temporary hon. secretary, having read the notice convening the meeting,

Miss Duffin expressed her thanks for being asked to preside, and said in occupying that position she merely represented several ladies who would have been thoroughly qualified to preside, but who declined to do so lest professional demands upon their time should have prevented their fulfilling the engagement at the last minute. She need hardly say how much they all regretted that Lady Hermione Blackwood could not be with them, and that she was confined to bed by illness. Lady Hermione was much disappointed that she was unable to come, but she had the purport of what she intended to say to them written out, and the paper would be read to the meeting. They were pleased to welcome Miss Huxley there amongst them. She had very kindly come from Dublin for the day in order to be present, and to give them an account of the Irish Nurses' Association as constituted and as conducted there. When they had heard Lady Hermione Blackwood's and Miss Huxley's addresses she would ask the Hon. Secretary, Miss Workman, to read the rules of the Irish Nurses' Association, and if they were then disposed to form an Ulster Branch of that Association there, it would be necessary to do so by passing formal resolutions to that effect. She might also add that the rules of the Irish Nurses' Association would be subject to amendment by the Ulster Executive in connection with their own branch if considered desirable to do so. In other respects she hoped that meeting might be considered as informal a one as possible, and that those who had any suggestions would make them.

LADY HERMIONE BLACKWOOD'S ADDRESS.

Lady Hermione Blackwood's paper, which was then read by Miss Duffin, stated that the meeting had been called to discuss the advisability and possibility of starting a branch of the Irish Nurses' Association in that part of the world. When she was in England last summer she met a young lady, an ex-nurse, who told her of a Nurses' Social Union which she had started in Somersetshire, and which had proved a great success. The primary object of the social union was to afford nurses the opportunity of keeping in touch with one another and abreast of the topics and questions affecting the profession. This was the scheme which there was some idea of bringing before them, but on further consideration it had been

thought wiser and more advantageous to make use of an association in existence in Ireland which had already done good service for the profession, and to propose the formation of a branch affiliated to that society—that was the Irish Nurses' Association. The objects of the Somersetshire Social Union and of the Irish Nurses' Association were much the same, though the organisation was somewhat different. To mention the purely local advantages of the formation of a branch of the Irish Nurses' Association up there, she would say, that it was proposed, should funds permit, to start a club-room for nurses in Belfast where the nursing papers could be seen, tea could be served, and where lectures could be given. The lectures would, indeed, be one of the features of the scheme. It had been said that hospital nurses got plenty of lectures, and would not care to attend. This was probably true as regarded nurses still in training in general hospitals, but they believed there were Sisters and Staff Nurses who would be glad to avail themselves of special lectures. Private nurses, poor-law nurses from the smaller infirmaries, and, especially, district nurses, felt they got very rusty indeed, when they had been out of hospital for some time, and they would be very glad of an opportunity for what Americans called post-graduate instruction. Then she would say to hospital nurses it was not intended that their debates should be purely medical. There was no reason why they should not get papers read on such subjects as the poor law, the care of the feeble-minded, the housing of the poor, or have popular lectures given on art, literature, and travel. These were the purely local advantages they might derive from the organisation of a branch, but the chief point of the scheme was that it was not purely local, and that it was not for the benefit of themselves alone. They trusted that all nurses working in small country towns, cottage-hospitals, and outlying districts throughout Ulster might be drawn into that organisation and share in its benefits. She thought that people who had not actually visited the district and poor-law nurses in remote parts of Ireland could not imagine the isolation and monotony of their lives. They could understand also that district nurses in small country villages and remote hamlets, or private nurses attending long chronic cases suffered very much from loneliness and missed the stimulating effect of an interchange of ideas with fellow workers. To nurses so situated the formation of such an association might prove a great help and blessing. So much for the benefits to individuals, but there was a larger aspect to the question—the benefit of union to them collectively and to their profession as a whole. The sense of professionalism, to quote the words of Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, and of duty to colleagues needed development amongst them. But it was true that however keen a professional spirit they might have, or however much enthusiasm, it was impossible for solitary units to keep in touch with nursing politics, or to have any say in the organisation of their profession. It was only as a connected body that they could operate with authority and influence public opinion. They believed that an association such as was proposed to be formed would help to raise the status of their

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