

THE NURSING CONFERENCE.

At the Conference which took place at the Royal Horticultural Hall, Westminster, S.W. 1, on Wednesday, June 23rd, the chair at the first afternoon session was taken by Miss Bradley, Matron of the Brook Hospital, Shooters' Hill.

STAFFING DIFFICULTIES IN SMALL HOSPITALS.

Miss Ind, of Stratford-on-Avon, spoke on the difficulties of the smaller hospitals in obtaining probationers and moved that some scheme of application should be drawn up whereby there should be co-operation between the large and the small hospitals, in order that time spent in the latter should be taken account of. A discussion took place later and after this it was put from the chair and carried that the following resolution be sent up to the General Nursing Council.

"This meeting of the Nursing Conference desires to call the attention of the General Nursing Council to the present unsatisfactory position of the small and special hospitals which cannot offer a full certificate to their probationers, and respectfully urges the Council to consider, when framing the regulations for the admission to the Register, the need for a scheme of affiliation between such hospitals and the larger schools."

FEVER NURSING AT HOME AND ABROAD.

Dr. Muller read a paper on "Fever Nursing in India," and what struck her audience was the enormous difficulties which existed for those engaged in this particular branch of nursing in India compared with the splendid arrangements at the Fever Hospitals in England.

THE FUTURE OF NURSING AND LIVING OUT.

Mr. Frank Briant, speaking on the living-out system for nurses, emphasised the necessity for making nursing a more attractive profession than it was at the present time. The deterioration in the class of women entering the profession was to be regarded as a national disaster. He gave the reasons which he regarded as responsible for such falling off, and said that they had proved at Lambeth that the living-out system attracted a better class of women. The only hope of getting educated women into the profession was to do away with the wicked hours and the very grinding work which had been the rule in the past.

THE TRAINED NURSE IN PUBLIC HEALTH WORK.

When the Conference reassembled at 5 o'clock the Chair was taken by Mrs. Paul, and the first speaker was Miss C. Margaret Alderman, who, in dealing with the progress of the trained nurse in public health work said it was necessary to take a short survey of the history of public health nursing. For the first few years no definite qualifications were laid down for public health appointments, then, as local authorities developed one or more branches of the work, they found that the most useful qualifications were three

years' general training, the certificate of the Central Midwives Board, and the certificate of the Royal Sanitary Institute.

As the work developed still further, local authorities became more progressive—especially during the war. Medical Officers of Health found from the working of their own Health Departments that trained nurses were the most efficient for the work, and the majority of these Officers and Health Committees laid down three years' general training as a minimum qualification.

Then the more progressive authorities required their Health Visitors to hold the certificates of the Central Midwives' Board and Royal Sanitary Institute in addition, and this standard was now required by all the best borough and county councils.

Stress had been laid on the fact that education was a great factor in public health work. This was so, but it must be of the right sort. The education of a Health Visitor was not the same as that required by a scholastic teacher. The Health Visitor had to teach people to carry out the laws for the prevention of disease; to do this she must have a knowledge of the symptoms of the diseases she was out to prevent, and of the men, women and children suffering from these diseases; therefore, training in the wards and outpatient department of a hospital was more suitable, and more thorough than that obtainable in a polytechnic or an university. You were not qualified to teach prevention by listening to a course of lectures, or by standing about a Welfare Centre or a Tuberculosis Dispensary.

Unfortunately the Ministry of Health allowed themselves to be dictated to by a body of amateurs instead of studying their own Health Departments. They drew up regulations first, and sent inspectors round afterwards, and in consequence drew up regulations which could never be put into practice without causing the Ministry of Health to lose the respect of the people.

The regulations proposed that a girl of twenty should act as a Health Visitor, providing she had had two years' training at a polytechnic, and that a graduate with one year's training should be recognised as a Health Visitor.

The girl of twenty should be ruled out of public health; she ought to be training as a nurse, or a teacher, or doing domestic work.

It was an absolute insult to send a girl of twenty (in the capacity of Health Visitor) to the mother of an infant, or a school child, or a tuberculous soldier, and it was nonsense to spend public money on salaries for girls of that age.

By laying down the general principle of three years' training, and selecting nurses with special experience in addition, preventive work would be helped on tremendously and medical officers would be supplied with qualified assistants.

Miss Alderman concluded by appealing to those interested in the question to uphold the ideal that one must serve one's country by training in hospital before assuming the position of a teacher in preventive work. They would have

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)