

## The Nursing Conferences.

### REMARKS ON MISS MOLLETT'S PAPER.

To thoughtful and far-sighted women the Conferences, arranged in connection with the Nursing Exhibition, have been, perhaps, the most interesting and gratifying feature of the programme. In various trades and professions the women workers are accustomed to meet in conference and to discuss technical points connected with their calling, to report progress, and to make suggestions and evolve schemes for the advancement of their work and position. But, although something has been done in this direction, and the first seeds have been sown by the Matrons' Council, these Conferences are the first definite meetings which have been organised by Nurses for Nurses, and the result has proved that the Nursing profession is beginning to speak and think for itself, and that it has very definite aims and wishes.

The Nursing Conference opened on Wednesday morning by the reading of Miss Mollett's admirable paper on "The Profession of Nursing," which was published in last week's NURSING RECORD.

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick took the chair, and, in opening the Conference, said she was glad to welcome her fellow workers, who were met together to exchange their views, to compare experiences, and to give expression to their wishes and desires for the improvement of their profession. It had been somewhat difficult to organise the Conference, but she hoped this tentative beginning would be only the first of a long series of annual gatherings of Nurses for the discussion of matters connected with their work.

It was advisable to emphasize the principle of Hospital workers meeting together for educational purposes. It was only in this way that one class of workers could be made aware of, and sympathise with, the trials and difficulties of other classes. It was only thus that London workers and those in the provinces could be brought into touch with each other, to the great advantage of both. Personally she hoped that these Conferences would help to smooth out many difficulties in the way of workers in all branches of the profession. She introduced Miss Mollett as a well-known reformer in Nursing matters.

At the conclusion of the paper, which was very much appreciated, and received warmly by the audience, an interesting discussion arose, in the course of which, Mrs. Fenwick said the most salient point raised by the paper ap-

peared to be whether Nurses were to organise for their own advantage, or whether they were to be legislated for without being themselves consulted upon the matter. While laying it down as a fundamental principle that the Nurse in every department of her professional work must be subordinate to the medical men, she held that their meetings and other organisations were better arranged by themselves for themselves, as they were the best judges of their own needs. It was a well-known fact that what had already been done towards the organisation and betterment of Nursing had been principally effected upon the initiation of women.

Miss Poole, Blackburn Infirmary, thought that the Nurses must proceed cautiously and steadily forward and not attempt too much at first. She called attention to the effort that has been made to sow dissensions between Nurses and Matrons. For her part, she felt assured that the Matrons were the only persons who could carry the Nurses forward. It was the Matrons' influence which told. She deprecated the tendency on the part of some Nurses to get away from discipline—and yet it was discipline which brought out their best, and helped them in turn to enforce it when they occupied positions of responsibility. The time had come when Matrons should make a stand for the authority of their position, and in this stand they needed, and should be able to count upon, the support of their colleagues.

Miss Huxley, Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital, Dublin, warmly supported the view that Matrons should co-operate for the benefit of Nurses in general. She thought that the Matron's influence over her own staff depended very much on herself.

Miss Isla Stewart thought it was inadvisable to have a distinct line drawn between the medical and nursing professions. She did not suggest a retrograde movement, and was strongly in favour of Registration and organisation. She thought the authority of the Matron depended largely on the Matron herself.

Miss Robertson, St. Helena Home, thought that the Nurses would always do better if they formed their organisations with the support of the medical profession.

Mrs. Fenwick drew attention to the value of professional organisation for women on the lines which had proved so successful for men. Hospital Secretaries met together to discuss matters affecting their work, as did the Medical Superintendents under the Local Government Board, and she thought Nurses should be at liberty to do the same. Such co-operation could not outrage professional etiquette, as during her training the Nurse was

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