

of the National Union of Women Workers, and Dr. Lillias Hamilton.

MISS STEWART'S ADDRESS.

LADIES,—It is with very great pleasure that, as chairman of the Matrons' Council, and in the name of the Executive Committee, I welcome you to-day to this, the first Annual Conference of the Matrons' Council. We are, as yet, a small body, and as an association only in our first youth, but we possess two great treasures, which belong to youth; Faith and Hope. We have a very sincere faith in the need of such an association as this, and an equally great hope as to its ultimate success. It is almost the first time that Matrons have met together, to discuss some of the problems which the progress of our profession make important and prominent. Although there seems to me no profession in which unity and intercourse among its members are more needy, yet we stand as rocks that have been rent asunder. There can be no two opinions on the utility and helpfulness of such a meeting, providing as it does, an opportunity for the exchange of ideas on subjects of vital importance, and of common interest. It is from such association as this that the development of the profession of nursing must come, an association comprising women, who, having once been nurses, are now at the head of hospitals, who superintend the training of the future matrons and nurses, and who, having no personal motive, must always have for their aim the development of their profession. But if we are to do this we must accept the responsibility of our position. I grant you it is easier for women to tell themselves they have no time for this, or for any business beyond the work of their own hospital, but let us recognise and accept the responsibility; and strive to produce that unity which gives strength, and encourage discussion, and exchange of ideas, which not only give width to our outlook, but will help to launch our profession on the broad sea of progress.

In organizing the Association we laid down as our objects five distinct propositions.

1st. To enable members to take counsel together upon matters affecting their profession. Solomon says, "As iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." There we have a very high authority for association and exchange of ideas. Our profession is so new and so unorganized, if I may use such a word, that the points open to discussion are legion. Hardly any point is authoritatively settled, except indeed the important point of obedience. Now, I may just say a word of warning. It is in no way advisable, that, in discussing general matters of ethical importance, that we need gossip about the private affairs of our respective hospitals; that is a dis-

tinct breach of faith, which will always be discouraged in this Association.

Our second object is to bring about a uniform system of education, examination, and certification and state registration for nurses in British hospitals. This is indeed a difficult point. At present all hospitals have different standards and methods, all physicians and surgeons have their own ideas as to how details should be carried out; even every ward sister differs from her neighbour as to the management of her ward, and how we are going to reconcile those conflicting parties I do not see. On the important, though elementary point, of the length of time required to train a nurse we are still at variance. Although the majority of hospitals have recognised the necessity for three years' training before a woman ought to be put in a position of trust, such as the head of a ward, still while even one hospital of importance, and influence, considers this time excessive, we cannot be said as a profession, to have really surmounted the first step of the very steep ladder leading to uniformity. Yet we must acknowledge that we have made a very considerable advance when we look back on twenty years ago! To my mind uniformity in examination, and certification present enormous and almost unsurmountable difficulties, and so far are we from that, at present, that we have not formulated a good method for either. I do not wish to be discouraging, but those points show how much there is for us to discuss and formulate. As an Association I think our duty is clear, being convinced of the need of something approaching uniformity it behoves us, by precept and example to inculcate this principle not only to our fellow Matrons, but to the general public, whose safety and interest will be safeguarded when it is consummated.

A third object was to appoint an advisory sub-committee, which we have done, and I think you need only read over the names of those who form it to show its efficiency.

Our fourth object we are consummating to-day by holding this conference.

Our fifth and final object, is to encourage members to understand the methods of procedure at meetings. My experience of women and meetings is, that not being accustomed to parliamentary procedure, we vote for measures we do not fully understand, we put ourselves in positions open to misconstruction, and when we frame bye-laws, our opponents simply ride roughshod through them—Therefore, I think it is really an important matter for the Matrons' Council to take up. We are so scattered that it is impossible to arrange meetings for this purpose for us all. If, however, we are to take part in the organization of our profession, we must fit ourselves for effectual service, by learning what is in order, and what is not.

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