

would rather do their best to help. They had to be very careful as to the kind of women who served on hospital Boards. They should have some knowledge of the kind of work they were going to undertake. She wanted to bring home to women that so long as they did not use the rights which were acknowledged to be theirs and did not perform the duties they were expected to fulfil, so long they could not press for more to be given to them. She thought the old proverb "Do the next thing" was what women ought to take to heart.

THE OVER-WORKING OF PROBATIONERS.

The Hon. Mrs. Joyce urged the false economy of over-working women during their training in hospitals. She considered that young nurses were systematically over-strained, and many broke down in consequence.

A WORD FOR THE MATRONS.

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick spoke from the point of view of the interne. She believed the statement made was true that the majority of hospital Matrons were opposed to women acting on hospital Boards. In principle she was in favour of women taking their place side by side with men on all public Boards and in every department deputed to deal with national affairs, but she realised how necessary training was to fit a woman for positions of public responsibility. To be useful a woman on a hospital Board must know something of finance, something of the aspirations of the great profession of medicine, and still more of the coming profession of nursing. No woman should ever accept a position on Ladies' Committees, they were sops to Cerberus which carried with them neither power nor responsibility, and conferred merely the status of a lady-like spy. The Matron "bogey" must also be laid; we must remember that the work of educated women in hospitals was no new thing; it occurred to herself, for instance, some twenty-two years ago, that the sick poor needed all the skill and care that women could give. The most efficacious way appeared to be to go into a hospital and do the drudgery. This many earnest women had done during the past quarter of a century, and the secret of antagonism upon the part of Matrons to women on hospital Boards was the fear of interference by the ignorant. To the honour of hospital Matrons it should be known that they were the only women who, during the past year, had tackled the War Office in relation to the notorious inefficiency of the Army Nursing system. Hospital administration was a highly intricate business; it was a vast question, and she commended it to the earnest study of intelligent women.

THE TEST OF TRAINING.

Miss Mary Gardener (Matrons' Council) said that in the past the conditions of nurse training were very arduous, but they had been greatly mitigated of late years. She did not consider it wise to make the test for probationers too easy. Nursing was at all times a great physical and mental strain, and just as the engineer in bridge building subjected his work to a doubly severe baggage test before entrusting human life on it, so probationers' physical fitness should be tested in the hospital.

MEDICAL OPPOSITION TO WOMEN.

Miss Brodie Hall said she had for eight years past been a Guardian at Eastbourne. That Board was composed of leisured, idle, and well-to-do people. For some time she had stood as the only lady Guardian of that Union. What they had to do with regard to women's position on Boards was to reach the unconverted. There were two great classes of people they wanted to get hold of. The most important were the electors themselves; and the other class included the women they wanted to send. She wished to make a suggestion with regard to the former, and that was that the Executive Committee of that Union should follow the example of most of the London political Associations and circulate an enormous number of leaflets and small pamphlets bearing upon the subject upon which the electors had to make up their minds. She thought that would do an immense amount of good in arousing the electors to a sense of their responsibility and in informing them on the work of women of which for the most part they were absolutely ignorant. She also desired to suggest that each locality should form, or assist in forming, a Committee to endeavour to return the most suitable people for elective posts. Great opposition had been offered by the medical staff of the Princess Alice Hospital, Eastbourne, she said, when an effort was made to get women on the governing authority—one doctor remarking that "he did not wish to have a hurricane of petticoats in the hospital." Among other speakers were Mrs. Greenlees, Mrs. Sheldon Amos, and Miss Leigh Browne.

In reply, Miss Louisa Stevenson said, before undertaking working on hospital Boards, a woman should possess administrative ability. Her own experience as a Poor Law Guardian had been invaluable; then everything written about nursing should be read; she had thus learnt much, and, greatly to the satisfaction of the Editor, she recommended the NURSING RECORD to those present as an educational medium.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)