

THE NURSING AND MIDWIFERY CONFERENCE. POOR LAW NURSING.

Miss James, a Poor Law Guardian of the Bethnal Green Union, presided at the first Session on the afternoon of Wednesday, April 23rd, at the L.C.C. Technical Institute, Vincent Square, S.W.

SOME OF THE DEFECTS IN POOR LAW NURSING ARRANGEMENTS AND SOME SUGGESTED REMEDIES.

The first paper, by Miss A. C. Gibson, late Matron of the Birmingham Infirmary, was read by Miss Holberton, as Miss Gibson was unable to be present.

Miss Gibson outlined the reforms which had taken place in the last fifty years owing to the work of the late Miss Louisa Twining, the passing of the Gathorne-Hardy Act, and the official abolition of pauper nursing, not yet, however, extinct.

There were, said Miss Gibson, several propositions for the improvement of nursing in the smaller workhouses, *i.e.*, (1) The joining of all Unions in one district; the chief objection to this was that it would remove the patients from the neighbourhood of their homes and deprive them of the society of their friends. (Miss Gibson wrote from a point of view unapprehended by the legislator who deals with humanity in bulk. Within her vision are suffering eyes turned to watch the ward door, becoming obscured in shadow, as peering painfully into the little crowd of visitors which separates into groups of twos and threes, it is evident that no friends will for them brighten the visiting hour with news of the details—trivial though they may be—which compose their world.)

(2) The utilisation of attendants in workhouses and the transfer to the nearest cottage hospital of cases of acute disease.

(3) The wider employment of district nurses.

(4) A fourth method was favoured by Miss Gibson as leading to absolute efficiency, namely, that all the large Poor Law Training Schools should unite in an effort to help the smaller infirmaries. She suggested that probationers' contracts with the large infirmaries should be for four years and a-half, three years to be spent in the training school, the fourth in a small union, and the last six months in the large training school, so that the pupils should be quite up-to-date when they passed out of their pupilage into the world.

It was necessary that the outlook of the larger infirmaries should not be parochial, but national. Also the fact that probationers did not stay in Poor Law work might be minimised if they were taught that the Poor Law was doing a great and good work and that they could help it on. Respect for the Service should be inculcated as a part of training.

The writer concluded by begging her hearers not to put the scheme on one side as impossible. She also advocated the establishment of a nursing Department at the Local Government Board Office, and asked each one present to do her share to further the efficient care of the sick. Their duty was to be useful, not according to their desires, but their powers.

THE MODERN POOR LAW TRAINING SCHOOL.

Miss Constance Todd, Matron of the Wandsworth (St. James') Poor Law Infirmary, Balham, referred to the ignorance prevalent amongst hospital nurses as to the organisation and working of a Poor Law Infirmary. Some years ago she herself thought infirmaries dreadful places, filled with all the hopeless cases turned out of hospitals, and that they had far too few nurses to nurse the patients properly. Her views had now changed in all but one respect, *i.e.*, as to the adequacy of the nursing staff.

She stated that in 1912 the Metropolitan Boards of Guardians and also the Northern Union of Clerks and Superintendents Registrars Society were considering a scheme by which there should be a recognised standard of training for all Poor Law Schools for Nurses and a Central Examination for the same. Neither scheme had come to anything yet and the matter seemed to have been dropped. Before the question was raised again she hoped nurses in England would have obtained State Registration and that there would be a Central Examination for all nurses from recognised Training Schools. Miss Todd then gave a syllabus of theoretical and practical training for nurses in force in many Poor Law infirmaries, many of which, she stated, were recognised as Midwifery Training Schools by the Central Midwives Board. This training was usually given to fourth-year nurses and in some massage was also taught. The Open Air Treatment and Tuberculin Treatment of phthisis were also carried out.

In conclusion, Miss Todd claimed that Poor Law Infirmarys were excellent training schools for women wishing to take up district or private nursing, Colonial nursing, work in sanatoria or schools, health visiting or social work amongst the poor, as well as to take charge of Poor Law Training Schools.

ADVANCES I HAVE SEEN IN POOR LAW NURSING.

Miss Elma Smith, Matron of the Central London Sick Asylum, Hendon, said that twenty or thirty years ago the same conditions, concerning which so much was heard of as to the nursing and management (or the lack of them) in certain country Unions and Infirmarys, existed in the larger number of the London Infirmarys, but the trained nurse was being steadily introduced, training schools were being started, and educated broad-minded women of high moral tone and the true missionary spirit went to work in these places prepared to give of their best for the sick poor. It was these acts of personal service which had brought the work up to its present standard. At

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