

that the nurse would be better fitted for her work because of a little change and a little time for play. She would return to the wards really refreshed in mind as well as in body. She would bring to her patients what they are always longing for—a little whiff from the outside. Living out was more than advisable; it was absolutely necessary, if we were to get the best nurses and the best out of them. We had no right to order nurses to be debarred from that knowledge of outside things allowed to women in every other walk of life.

In the discussion which followed, in which Miss Thurstan, Miss Penn and others took part, the general feeling was against the proposal. It was pointed out that a nurse would have less time off duty, as at least an hour must be allowed for going to and returning from her work. Moreover, the question of suitable lodging was a great difficulty; and an uninviting picture was drawn of a nurse in comfortless lodgings, preparing her own meal when tired with the day's work.

In reply, Miss Ashby said that many nurses would live at home, to which there was a general chorus of dissent.

THE NEED FOR ORGANISATION IN THE NURSING PROFESSION.

Miss Atkey, Matron of the Royal Gwent Hospital, Newport, Monmouthshire, then read a paper on the "Need for Organization in the Nursing Profession," and said that though there was among the more forward women in the nursing world a spirit of conscious unity, the mass of nurses were still unconscious of the efforts being made to bring the various sections into touch with one another, and did not realize that co-operation was daily becoming more necessary if they were to move onward and take their place in the history of the century.

To the Matrons who knew her best, the average nurse was a lovable, sincere, unselfish but unbusinesslike person, apt to concentrate on what lay immediately before her, and unconscious of what was going on immediately outside her own work. She showed herself short-sighted on some occasions, and splendidly devoted and efficient on others. The present was an opportunity to consider whether something could not be done to produce a more even-minded, complete, evolved type of woman, better fitted for the enormously widened opportunities of to-day, and capable of taking a higher place in the life of the community.

Miss Atkey urged that if all nurses united they would be able to make themselves felt in many departments of public life, strong enough to classify the training schools, to insist on thorough and efficient training for pupil nurses, to defend their weaker members, to provide for their own needs, and to make themselves heard on all matters affecting the sick and needy. She concluded by urging all nurses who cared for the best interests of their profession to throw in their lot with any organisation which had a democratic basis, the aims of which were wide enough to

include not only professional advancement, but the welfare of humanity.

Miss Pye, Secretary of the National Union of Trained Nurses, spoke of its aims, and questions having been asked, Miss Atkey said that in Newport they were working the National Union because it happened to suit a community drawn from individual nurses working in different branches, but she had purposely not advocated the claims of any special society.

N.B.—It must be remembered that the organisation of nurses in the United Kingdom began in 1888, and that all three kingdoms have societies of both Matrons and Nurses working for the organisation of the profession by the State.

There is therefore very limited scope now for new nursing organisations, and efforts should rather be directed to strengthening those which already exist. Those who desire to acquaint themselves with the subject should study the third volume of "A History of Nursing," by Miss L. L. Dock.

VOCATION *versus* PROFESSION.

Miss E. Margaret Fox, Matron of the Prince of Wales Hospital, Tottenham, presented the next paper. She remarked that some people did not believe that a sense of vocation was necessary to the making of a good nurse, and assumed that a girl could enter a hospital to take up an interesting career just as she would enter a college or house of business; others, that the sense of vocation had died out with the Victorian Era, that it did not exist in the outlook of the present day nurse, who was worldly minded and grasping, a lover of pleasure rather than of work. Some thought that the religious vocation had nothing to do with nursing, and others that the spirit of true vocation was as present as ever, but needed seeking out, and that a sense of call, a single heart, dignified one's work, and magnified one's office.

Vocation signified a calling, and if one had received a genuine call, insistent, clear, the only possible thing to do was to follow it. There was nothing namby pamby about a sense of vocation, it did not imply a city of refuge in which the lazy could hide from the dust of conflict. No one could deny a spirit of vocation to Florence Nightingale. She did not rest until her ideals were in some degree fulfilled. Vocation implied practical energy. No one's work was the poorer for having once seen a vision of it as it might be. Its possession enabled us to attract and influence others. Vocation vitalised effort, to have found it was to be happy. To divorce the spirit of vocation from nursing meant plucking out its golden heart.

In moving a vote of thanks to the speakers, the Chairman said that the evening had been a delight to her. It was a joy to find a guardian expressing himself on the side of Poor Law Reform. Miss Ashby's proposition was so new to her that she required time to think it over.

In returning thanks for the speakers Mr. Ward said he was delighted that all four papers had dovetailed in so well.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)