

THE CONFERENCE OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF TRAINED NURSES.

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In our last issue we devoted the space at our disposal, in connection with this Conference, held at 3, Vere Street, London, W. on November 16th and 17th, to a report of the first day's proceedings, and to dealing, at considerable length, with the address of the Honble. Albinia Brodrick on the second day.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 17TH.

Morning Session.

MR. STEPHEN PAGET, F.R.C.S., presided at the morning session and introduced Dr. Thomas, Assistant to the Medical Officer of the London County Council as one of the most brilliant men of his year, and one who had given himself to public health work, administrative and educational. The medical profession, he said, are concerned both with the prevention of disease and with the healing of the diseased; both are necessary, but, on the whole, the man who can help to promote national health is the better employed. Nurses, also, see both sides, and by practising and preaching the rules of health every nurse may do work of great use for the community.

DEVELOPMENTS IN PUBLIC HEALTH.

DR. THOMAS said that in attempting to give some account of recent developments in Public Health one is almost bewildered by the rapidity with which the scope of State Medicine has been extended, and the multiplicity of local bodies that have been set up one after another dealing with one aspect or another of State Medicine. One is almost tempted to believe that some hidden hand has been at work whose purpose it has been to further confound the confusion which already existed.

Very impressive, too, is the general and often enthusiastic acquiescence of the sense of the community in State interference, which but a few years ago would have been scouted as utterly impossible and preposterous. Nor has the war in any way interfered with these tendencies in the way of arrest, rather has it intensified and accelerated its process and achieved changes of attitude which a generation of peace would not have brought about. Twenty years ago the whole of Public Health might almost have been summed up in two words—Drains and Infection. Now it comprises, or promises shortly to comprise, not only prevention of infectious disease, and the prevention of all classes of disease, but the cure of disease as well. Then we find being brought into the orbit of State Medicine—leaving out for the moment the Poor Law Administration, which has long stood like a pariah apart—a great body of whole time Medical Officers of Health, panel practitioners, and others, almost too numerous to mention who are being quietly but surely brought within its scope.

As we have already notified, we hope to print this illuminating paper in abridged form; we

therefore only refer now to the well-merited tribute paid by Dr. Thomas to the work of the School Nurses. He said that "School Nurses, deriving added powers from the Children's Act, have produced a vast improvement in the cleanliness of the children; their devoted, unflinching, steady educational pressure being revealed by the improving figures year and year, even in war time, when the chances of infection are multiplied a thousandfold by the close proximity of the huffer-mugger life of the trench and camp to the homes of the people. Cleansing stations have been established, and have largely operated to prevent the infestation of the population by itch and lice, so repeatedly introduced into families by visits of the soldiers—parents and brothers.

"Had it not been for this service of school nurses the schools would have been overwhelmed by the invasion of these minor horrors of war, whereas, in fact, they have steadily become cleaner, even during the war."

DISCUSSION.

In the discussion which followed, MISS BEATRICE KENT said she rejoiced to know that so much had been done in the direction of the improvement of public health, and referred to the progress made in the United States of America and to a very interesting paper which she had heard read at the Conference convened by the three great National Associations of nurses at San Francisco, in 1915, by Miss Mary Wheeler, on a Central School of Nursing and Public Health. The School was organized by the Illinois Training School, Chicago, which had been selected because it was organized under a committee independent of the hospitals. There was a great demand for greater opportunities of many forms of social service in connection with public health.

MISS MARSTERS emphasised the futility in cases of scabies of treating the children of school age and allowing them to go back to their homes where children above and below school age were untreated. All children suffering from the disease, whether school children or not, should be treated.

The Chairman said he had listened to many lectures, but he thought the one just given by Dr. Thomas to the National Union of Trained Nurses, every word of which went home to nurses, was the best he had ever heard.

MISS CANCELLOR, in proposing a cordial vote of thanks to Dr. Thomas for his most interesting lecture, said that they had heard that an enormous number of departments were concerned with Public Health Work. As a good many of these were concerned with our own department, she pleaded with all nurses, hospital-nurses, district nurses, school nurses, midwives, health visitors, to work together and try to make their own bit as perfect as possible.

Dr. Thomas, in reply, said that he hoped his lecture would be some use in clearing up a situation which needed clear thinking.

The condition described by Miss Marsters arose from the lack of co-ordination which he had

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