

THE REV. R. C. GILLIE.

The Rev. R. C. Gillie, in commencing his address, paid a most eloquent tribute to the work done by the nurses throughout the war. They had performed their work with unshrinking fidelity. It has been said that the men who had fought and died had won the crown of honour. He (Mr. Gillie) thought that if this were so, it might well be said that the nurses had won their coronet. They had endured hardship and danger, had gone without question wherever duty called them. That they should, at this time, organize a Society such as that under the auspices of which the Conference was held, showed that their work for their country was not finished. The formation of such a Society appeared a most hopeful sign and expressive of their desire to serve England; he considered that the Society would do much to prevent disease and suffering, and to secure that little children would not start life with weakened constitutions and crippled in the race of life. The whole population was bound to benefit through the efforts of this Society of Trained Nurses in Public Health Work.

Mr. Gillie expressed his conviction that thoroughly equipped and thoroughly qualified workers should take the field of Public Health Work, and thereby the best would be secured for even the poorest. Nothing could be more calamitous than that such work should be undertaken by those who are not properly qualified. People without knowledge and experience would only add to the anxieties of the working fathers and mothers. Speaking as a member of the public, Mr. Gillie said that, apart from actual professional qualifications, he could say from experience that the nurses had proved themselves to be possessed not only of skill but of tact, which had enabled them to establish the kindest relationships with those whom it was their duty to teach and care for. Mr. Gillie told a touching story of the confidence and affection of the wife of a poor patient for his district nurse, and wished the Society a happy and successful field of public service.

DR. MARGARET RORKE.

Dr. Margaret Rorke, who has wide experience in Welfare Work, both from an administrative and practical point of view, emphasised the importance of securing fully qualified nurses for Public Health Work. The mothers, she said wanted women who "knew their job," who understood what they had to teach; and they respected those who did. There was a tendency to have too much of the amateur element in Public Health Work at the present time, and mothers resented this and regarded it as a form of district visiting of a very inquisitive kind. The mothers were very shrewd and soon knew a woman who understood her work, and they did not wish the advice of inexperienced women; the teaching of those had no value in the eyes of the working mother. Women of character were wanted for Public Health Work—women of wide

experience, women with full hospital training, and with as much special training in other branches as may be possible, and women were wanted who had a wide knowledge of humanity and of work among the sick and the poor. In short, those who are to undertake Public Health Work should be fully equipped for it. The V.A.D.s, whom it was proposed, should enter the field of such work, were not adequately equipped and trained for the responsibilities which such work involves, but they had a certain youthful brightness which was a considerable asset. They had not had the same hard life that the nurses had, they had not had to undergo the three or four years of hospital training which—under the present system—sapped so much of the vitality of the nurses. The latter could not be expected to bring to the work the same youthful gaiety and the influence which such brightness gave when they were overworked and often harassed by the necessity for providing for old age, when very insufficiently paid and unable to get the recreation and change so necessary in maintaining a high standard of work, and which other women enjoyed.

Dr. Rorke said that she was glad that the nurses had decided to form an Association of those members of the profession who were engaged in Public Health Work. She felt that she could not urge them too strongly at this time to combine and so protect themselves. It was only by taking combined action that they could protect themselves from the semi-trained. Every nurse in Public Health Work should join the Association, and—speaking from the medical point of view—she hoped that the Association would do all in its power to urge the Ministry of Health to employ only fully trained nurses, to pay them adequately, and provide them with pensions.

MISS G. LE GEYT.

Miss Le Geyt spoke eloquently, as follows:—

YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS,—By your gracious words you have given me just the necessary courage to face my fellow workers with an overwhelming conviction of the necessity for trained nurses in Public Health work to form an organised Society.

To launch another Society at a time when every trained nurse should already be a member of a self-organised Nurses' Society, preferably the one of which your Royal Highness is the esteemed President, the R.B.N.A., because it is a matter of duty that each member of the nursing profession should use her influence and take her share in helping to obtain a just and true Bill in Parliament for State Registration—therefore to launch yet another organisation has not been undertaken without due consideration and from a sense of grave necessity in the interests of trained nurses now engaged in Public Health work.

What can be more refreshing than "good talk" when it is in the company of one's fellow workers, with no restrictions to the amount of "shop"—well it is just this opportunity which a society of our own will give us?

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)