

# Royal British Nurses' Association.

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## ASSOCIATION OF TRAINED NURSES IN PUBLIC HEALTH WORK CONFERENCE.

The drawing-room of the Royal British Nurses' Association was packed to overflowing on Saturday last when the Association of Trained Nurses in Public Health Work held its Conference. Miss Wise, Chairman of the Association, presided.

Dr. Clarke Trotter, Medical Officer for the Borough of Islington, was the first speaker and commenced his remarks by stating that, in his opinion, women who practise as Health Visitors should have had three years' hospital training, should possess some special qualification for Public Health Work, such as the Health Visitor's Certificate of the Royal Sanitary Institute, and should hold the C.M.B. certificate. He considered that the trained nurse was especially suited for health work because her training was not too intensive as was apt to be the case with certain other classes of applicants for the work; then she was in the habit of dealing with all sorts of temperaments, she came into touch with many different types of character and, owing to her work as a probationer she might be said to have commenced at the bottom rung of the ladder and worked up, so that her knowledge was not superficial. She was used also to hardship and so was able to appreciate the hardships of others. She was used to recording reports and had a special knowledge of both mother and child, a knowledge which it is impossible to acquire at clinics. There were, however, said the lecturer, disabilities from which nurses suffered. They might not, in some cases, have had their training properly apportioned, they might have had too much medical or too much surgical work; it might be that they had had very little training in the nursing of women and children. They might not have been trained in the nursing of infectious cases, or perhaps in the nursing of tuberculous cases. Others might not have a natural aptitude for Health Visiting for, to a great extent, the real Health Visitor is born not made. Again, a nurse might not have her heart in the work, and then she must prove more or less a failure. She might not be suited for her particular post, as some women are better in a country post than in a town one, and vice versa. Above all, the Health Visitor must guard against turning herself into a mere recording machine.

Dr. Clarke Trotter then went on to speak very gravely of the prospects of Trained Nurses in Public Health Work, and urged them to combine and prepare to protect themselves in the future. The times, he said, were very critical for nurses for several reasons, among these the necessity for competing with women with a lesser training than their own; they had to face a very great deal of competition in the field of Public Health Work from those who had acted as Red Cross workers during the war and who had taken some health certificate and the C.M.B. Certificate to enable them to practise as Public Health Workers. Then, said Dr. Trotter, there is no doubt that salaries are coming down; at present the salary very frequently includes a bonus and, when that is cut off, the salary left will be deplorably low. Indeed, things looked so critical that nurses should consider their position very seriously before entering upon Public Health Work, and for those who were already in it the great thing was to organise, to combine in such a society as that before which he was lecturing and to *fight* for better things.

Dr. Trotter said that there was one point to which he might very usefully draw the attention of the nurses that afternoon. Many lost opportunities for good posts because their applications were inadequate; many times the lecturer had seen them placed thereby at a great disadvantage with those really far less qualified to do Public Health Work than themselves. They often absolutely did not know how to frame an application for an appointment in order to face competition from people well versed in such a matter. Added to that, so few nurses were experienced in facing interviews with bodies of people and often their manner became so nervous that it was difficult for anyone who was anxious to get them appointments to persuade those who were to make the appointment that a nurse before them knew her work. He urged the Association to institute some sort of scheme to educate nurses as to how they should send up their applications and how to conduct themselves when interviewed by local authorities.

Miss Helen Pearse, Superintendent of the L.C.C. School Nurses, spoke next and very strongly endorsed the previous lecturer's remarks on the need for nurses learning how to show themselves and their qualifications to better advantage when applying for appointments. She mentioned also

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