

WOMEN'S MEDICAL SERVICE SUGGESTED FOR INDIA

AT a council meeting of the Association of Medical Women in India held in Ludhiana, the members present were Dr. Benson of Bombay, President; Dr. Balfour of Patiala, Dr. Vaughan of Simla, Dr. Brown of Ludhiana, and Dr. O'Brien, Lucknow.

A letter was sent to His Excellency the Viceroy urging that the scheme at present under consideration of the Government of India for a properly organised Government service for medical women, should be inaugurated on this auspicious occasion of Their Imperial Majesties' presence in India.

A memorial was forwarded to Her Excellency Lady Hardinge, petitioning for the formation of College Hostels for women students in all the University cities where mixed education is carried on in India. It was pointed out that such hostels had been at work most successfully in all the large educational centres in England for very many years.

The Council of the A. M. W., while admitting that there are numbers of women whose social and religious customs prevent them from making use of these centres of mixed education, is of opinion that the formation of such hostels, which would be designed for the reception of students of Arts, Law, Science and Medicine, would very greatly help to attract women of the higher social ranks both among Indians and the domiciled community. A note was sent to the Hon'ble Surgeon-General Sir C. P. Lukis, K.C.S.I., thanking him for his continued interest in the welfare of medical women and begging for the appointment of women inspectors, who should inspect the work and conditions of life of all medical women—especially of the lower grades in remote districts.

In connection with the council meeting of the Association of Medical Women in India, advocating the services of women doctors in this country, a letter to the *Times* from Dr. Emma Slater, the Honorary Secretary of the United Kingdom Branch Association, claims attention. After dealing with the medical work undertaken by the Government peculiar to the country, Dr. Slater says:—"Another of India's unique conditions is the natural disinclination among a very large proportion of the female population, whether of high or low caste, or even outcasts, to be attended medically or surgically except by members of their own sex. The purdah system is prevalent to a very large extent in India: it is not a religious tenet, but a social custom, derived from the insecure condition of woman among early settlers. Even where the purdah system

is not strictly observed, the feeling against male doctors is a strong one, and women will often leave treatment until too late, on account of their strong dislike to be attended by a man. Out of the 150 million women in India, it would be no exaggeration to say that 100 million object to being treated by a man doctor. How has the Government of India, which makes itself responsible for the medical and surgical treatment of vast populations which bring to suffering millions the benefits of Western science and surgery, a Government which so carefully abstains from anything that may wound or annoy those whom it so beneficently rules; how has it treated this strong and legitimate prejudice among the inarticulate half of the varied peoples of the Empire? By leaving to religious bodies, and to charitable and philanthropic enterprises, that which it leaves undone."

After referring to the work done by missionaries and Lady Dufferin's work in forwarding the movement, the writer continues: "The Government of Bombay alone saw the necessity of placing women doctors upon a proper *status*, and through the wisdom of the then Governor, Lord Reay, and the devoted labours of Dr. Edith Pechey, the Cama Hospital was inaugurated 25 years ago, the only Government hospital in India officered entirely by women, and it still remains a model of what a women's hospital should be. Besides these agencies, there are about 150 women doctors working for themselves, the large number of these being Indian women with Indian diplomas. But the Government of India has persistently closed its eyes to the duty it owes such a large section of its dependants—*viz.*, to provide a properly officered body of women doctors, under State supervision—in fact, a women's Indian Medical Service. That the idea is not a new one a quotation from an article by Dr. Elizabeth Hoggan which appeared in the *Contemporary Review* for August, 1882, will prove:—"What is needed is a new medical department, as a part of the public service of India, managed by women, and responsible only to some high officer of State, working in harmony with the existing civil medical service, but co-ordinate and not subordinate to it." This quotation goes to show that the question has, for too long a period, been held in abeyance, and everyone who understands the question and the large field it covers will desire to see these suggestions materialise."

Do not think that what your thoughts dwell upon is of no matter. Your thoughts are making you.—BISHOP STEERE.

The wealth of a man is in the number of things he loves and blesses, and which he is loved and blessed by.—CARLYLE.