

NURSING ECHOES.

*** *Communications (duly authenticated with name and address, not for publication, but as evidence of good faith) are especially invited for these columns.*

THE Drawing Room Meeting, held by the kind invitation of the Dowager Countess of Shrewsbury, at 37, Lowndes Square on the 13th inst., seems to have been most successful. Many well-known ladies and gentlemen were present, and a great deal of interest in the subject of the Registration of Nurses was both aroused and expressed. Dr. Bedford Fenwick, who occupied the Chair, opened the proceedings by briefly stating what the British Nurses' Association was, and what it proposed to do, and then called upon his wife to propose the first resolution which was identical with the one proposed at the meeting at Mrs. Head's house, which I described last week. Mrs. Fenwick said that, till the time of the Crimean War, Nursing was not in this country taught nor practised on the scientific lines upon which it was now acknowledged to be based.

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So Miss Nightingale must always be regarded as the Mother of modern English Nursing, because to her undoubtedly belonged the credit of founding our first Training School for Nurses, and of enunciating clear principles as the essential rules of the Art. Her example had been widely followed, not only in the institution of similar schools all over the kingdom, but also by large and ever-increasing numbers of gentlewomen adopting the calling of attendants on the sick. The results of the double improvement, both in the character of the work, and of the workers, were that skilled Nursing was now an acknowledged factor in the treatment of disease or accident, and that the Trained Nurse was trusted by Doctors, and respected by the public. But great as the improvements had hitherto been, Nurses desired to advance still further in professional usefulness and public estimation. They knew they were not perfect, and they were well aware that they had many black sheep within their ranks. Broadly speaking, therefore, from a Nurses' point of view, Mrs. Fenwick said two things were necessary—better education for the work and better protection for the workers.

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They wished for better education, by some uniformity of system being adopted by every training school, and by the general standard of knowledge being raised to a much higher level than was now considered sufficient or satisfactory. But it was as important for the public that

Nurses should be trustworthy as it was that they should be well taught. Mrs. Fenwick would only discuss the question from the Nurse's point of view, and from that standpoint she considered the present system grossly unfair. Those who had spent, perhaps, three years in acquiring the knowledge of their work were exposed to the competition—in Private Nursing—of any woman, however ignorant or utterly unsuitable she might be, who chose to don a cap and apron, and call herself a Trained Nurse. The public had not the smallest means of judging between the genuine article and the sham. But beyond this, Trained Nurses, who were drunkards, or thieves, or worse, might without let or hindrance continue to *practise their calling and bring constant discredit upon it, and cause public distrust of other Nurses.* Men would not bear such glaring injustice; they obtained Acts of Parliament to control and purify their professions from those who disgraced them. She failed, therefore, to see why women had not an equal right to protect themselves. She, for one, was proud of being a Nurse, and she entirely declined to allow herself to be classed in the public mind with some specimens of Nurses, of whom she gave graphic examples. One-sixth of the Nurses in the Kingdom felt with her, the Matrons of nearly two hundred important London and Provincial Hospitals, and two thousand beside of the best educated woman in the profession, felt with her, and had in one year joined the British Nurses' Association to bring about reform, to obtain legal powers to raise their profession in knowledge and usefulness, to purify it from ignorant women and the black sheep who were found in their ranks; and with the utmost confidence they called upon all women to support and assist them in the great work which the Association had undertaken to do. (Applause.)

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MR. OWEN LANKESTER strongly seconded the resolution. He showed the great and increasing importance attached to Nursing in the modern treatment of disease, and therefore the immense usefulness of Registration to Medical men as giving them a ready means of knowing who was and who was not a reliable Nurse. He pointed out how impossible it was for a busy Doctor to catechise every Nurse who was sent to tend his patients as to her knowledge or character, and so he had to accept her as fully trained and thoroughly reliable when she might be neither the one nor the other. Registration had been found of the utmost value to the public in the case of Medical men, and of other professions, and he considered it would be of even more use in the case of Nurses.

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