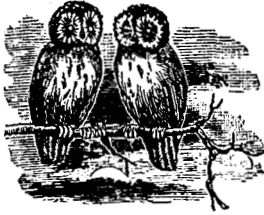


Matrons in Council.



MISS FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE has kindly given the Matrons' Council the benefit of her opinion upon the schedule of questions recently issued by the Council concerning the Education and Registration of Nurses. Miss Nightingale's replies have taken the form of a valuable article, and this will, doubtless, arouse the greatest interest at the first Sessional Conference of the Council on October 24th.

Royal British Nurses' Association.

(Incorporated by Royal Charter.)



ON October 1st the new library in connection with the Association was thrown open to members. We congratulate the Association upon carrying out this scheme, which will be, we have no doubt, a great source of pleasure to those Nurses who are able to avail themselves of its privileges. Books can be exchanged from ten to four daily.

We have received several enquiries concerning the slip which has been issued from the office concerning the extension of the Register, and should advise members desirous of information to write to the office. Owing to the suggestion to issue a Directory of Nurses, for which no definite professional qualification is necessary, by unknown persons, it was thought by the more experienced Matrons that the danger of this unprofessional publication might be minimised to the public if the qualification column in the Register of Trained Nurses, issued by the Royal British Nurses' Association, was extended yearly, so that the members might have inserted the posts obtained, showing their professional progress. Thus the benefits of a Register and Directory would be combined. We would therefore advise members of the Association to carefully correct the slips sent to them, inserting details they wish mentioned, such as appointments gained, contributions to the Nursing press, certificates or medals obtained, &c., and we would also earnestly advise them to support the principle and standard of training of their Chartered Corporation, by refusing to place their names and qualifications in any Directory which attempts to minimise the value of the three years' standard by admitting persons with short service and inefficient experience on its pages, and thus confusing the public as to what is and what is not a trained Nurse.

In accordance with our promise made in last week's issue, we will briefly consider the scheme proposed in the *Nurses' Journal* for the formation of Local Centres of the Association. We have already exposed the ignorance, of the writer of the article in our contemporary, upon Nursing matters, and the many demands of more important questions upon our space compel us to summarise our objections to the principles involved in the suggested scheme.

We have already commented upon [the absurdity of the Association, at this period of its existence, requiring the "leaven of lay help," which seems to be a "necessity" to our dispirited contemporary. The whole *raison d'être* of the Association is that it should be a professional body formed solely of professional people, in order to carry out purely professional objects. The *Nurses' Journal*, to the great indignation of its readers, proposes that "women of leisure" should be made "happier" by "profitably employing some of their spare time" in "helping forward," the organisation of "local centres" of the Association. Clergymen's daughters the writer considers ineligible, but "doctors' daughters," she believes, "might find very congenial and suitable work in organising and serving as hon. secretary to a local centre." The "hon. secretary," we are informed, would "concern herself about the comfort of the members." This is a wide and elastic phrase, but savours somewhat of a patronising interference to which trained Nurses are not accustomed and which they will hardly appreciate. We have not a word to say against the idea of branches of the Association formed on the lines of branches of the British Medical Association or similar bodies, but the scheme propounded in our contemporary on the plan of the Girls' Friendly Society is so utterly unsuited to the feelings and needs of Nurses that it is only calculated to bring ridicule upon those who have suggested it.

The placid patronage idea runs through the whole scheme, and it is evidently the opinion of our contemporary that any "ladies with busy minds" would be welcomed if they undertook to "organise" Nurses. The phrase "busy minds" is excellent. It conveys such a nice distinction between such ladies and mere ordinary "busybodies."

If a lady with a busy mind "wished to start a local centre, I think [says the anonymous writer] she should begin her crusade by first trying to form a committee," that is to "try to induce the medical men of the neighbourhood," to give their "patronage." Then "she should next try to find and appoint an hon. secretary who would bring time and enthusiasm to the task, and who would be possessed of tact and discrimination, good temper and pleasant manners. This combination is difficult but I think not impossible to discover."

It surely needs no comment to expose the absurdity of permitting any lady into whose busy mind the idea should come, to start a branch of the association at her own sweet will. What would happen if three or four such ladies happened to live in the same town and all commenced such a "crusade," it requires no fervid imagination to predict. The pitiful ignorance of the writer is further shown in her statement that "each branch should send a member or members to the quarterly meetings of the General Council in London." In the first place, if her scheme were carried out "in all parts of the country" no hall at present built in London would hold the "members" who might be present, and in the second place, the Charter and Bye-Laws make no provision for such wholesale additions to the General Council; so that the proposal involves an illegality.

The scheme in short is ridiculous and unworkable, and it should be clearly understood that it has been propounded in the organ of the Association before it has even been authorised by the General Council, a departure from custom which cannot be commended.

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