

ARE NURSES CRAMMED?

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

MADAM,—We are accustomed to hear a great deal about the severity of examination tests for Nurses; of the "cramming," and of the great tax on mind and physique entailed by preparing for the exams. at the end of the first year. Pathetic stories are told of Probationers getting into a condition almost amounting to brain fever, arising from overstrain and anxiety as to whether they will "get through" their ordeal. It is some years since I trained, and I have therefore accepted somewhat on faith the repeated assertions that "modern requirements" exacted so much more science and knowledge from the Nurse. And I have believed implicitly in the mental sweating we are often led to suppose is the rule in our large Training Schools. It was therefore somewhat of a surprise to me to see in a recent number of the NURSING RECORD a list of the questions set to the Probationary Nurses at the Metropolitan Hospital. It appears to me that a more simple paper *could* hardly have been set. In fact, what is called the elementary paper is just such as I should myself set and consider suitable for the village pupils of my Nursing Courses given under the Technical Institute Act. And please remember these exams. are held after six lectures only, and that the candidates in these cases are simple village folk—servants, cottagers' wives, labourers' daughters—many of whom have the utmost difficulty in writing and spelling the answers to the questions asked. But they are quite capable after six lectures and practice classes, combined with the reading of an elementary text-book specially prepared for them, to answer questions in every way up to the standard of the one set by the Metropolitan Hospital, under the headed Elementary Paper. I should like, therefore, to ask if this Elementary Paper is intended for Probationers at the end of their first year. If so, I must entirely re-arrange my views regarding the mental cramming of our Nurses.

Truly yours,

A COUNTY COUNCIL LECTURER.

COMPULSORY CHAPEL.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

MADAM,—I quite agree with all that has been said on this subject in the very interesting correspondence column of your admirable paper, and I should like to take this opportunity of saying what a keen source of delight all of us in this large Hospital take in the space entitled "Letters to the Editor." I have never seen—in any paper connected with medicine and Nursing—such a wonderful Parliament for the expression of everybody's opinion, as is contained in what is to me one of the absorbing features of your paper.

But I am digressing from the chapel. It seems to me nearly as bad for Hospital as for Infirmary Nurses, to have to go to the chapel "on the premises." How I do dread it. Because we have just the same coughs in *our* chapel, and just as much physical wreckdom and bankruptcy as "Infirmary Nurse" complains of. But I must allow that Hospital patients are not quite so depressing as are pauper inmates. The patients, in the larger number of cases, have *something* to look forward to and so do not furnish quite such a miserable object-lesson as "Infirmary Nurse" so pictur-

esquely describes. The visitors to our Hospital chapel say:—"What a sweet sight it is," and "How lovely to see all these sick people come to the service." No doubt it is to *them*. They have been associating all the week with health. *We* have spent it in company with death and disease, and we cannot help craving for "Sundays off."

Sincerely yours,

AGATHA BURT.

A HARDSHIP.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

MADAM,—I have often intended to write to the RECORD, and call attention to what I consider is one of the greatest hardships in the Nursing profession. I have waited long, hoping that some one more competent would voice the wrong more eloquently than I, but as no one has taken it up, I have made up my mind to do my best.

I am speaking of the common practice of Hospital appointments being virtually made weeks before vacancies are advertised. It appears to be one of the traditions of Hospital Committees that all the important vacancies arising on the staff should be promptly advertised in the medical and nursing press.

Now, I allow that this is perfectly just and right when the advertisement is *bona-fide*, and when the Board honestly desires a wide publicity to the vacancy with a view to selection and election of the fittest. But I contend, from actual knowledge, that in a large number of these cases *no vacancy really occurs*. The staff or the Board have long before decided on the appointment, sometimes on a candidate in their own Hospital—sometimes on an outsider. And it is a great injustice to other candidates to profess that there is any hope of a fair consideration of merits and a consequent choice. It often entails a great deal of work on the part of a busy woman, to get letters written and special testimonials. She often spends quite a week in going amongst her friends and organising what influence she may have. And she is frequently put to a good deal of expense, and all the time *no position is open*. It has long been filled, and all this larce of application and testimonial sending is gone through as a conventional routine. It is an expense to the Hospital, it is wearisome and disappointing to candidates, and it is by no means an honourable, above-board transaction on the part of the committee, and a recent curious incident of what you aptly term a "shuffling of Matrons" has added a new terror to the seekers after Hospital appointments. We can never now be sure that even if we are approved and appointed by a committee that we shall not receive a communication requesting us to resign on the ground that when we were appointed someone "with a better claim was overlooked."

It appears to me only a matter of elementary justice that when a Hospital position falls vacant, the committee should first decide whether there is a suitable candidate already in the Hospital. If so, the position should not be advertised; if not, there should be a fair field and no back-stairs favour.

Sincerely yours,

A STRAIGHTFORWARD WOMAN,

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