

There is another great advantage, and that is that with the Middlesex system we are not troubled with many "lydies"; as a rule we have either gentlewomen or good sensible women, many, *many*, of whom have given up service and taken up a harder life from the highest of motives, and who proved themselves to be not only good, conscientious women but turned out splendid nurses. Lady nurses *may*, perhaps, be more suited to be sisters of wards, lady superintendents, authors of nursing books, &c., but if they do not rise above mediocrity, let me then have a good nurse with her head well screwed on her shoulders, instead of a Lady Muff. Of the latter article there are many in every hospital, absolutely void of conception, individuality, or personality. It is, perhaps, owing to these that our profession does not advance more than it does, and that medical men still think that they can treat us as they like. If nurses will be like a flock of sheep, if they will lack moral courage and allow themselves to be dragged by the strongest current; if they do not think out a question, form their opinions, and possess the courage of expressing them, whether they be ladies or otherwise, we shall never advance. Not being a member of the Royal British Nurses' Association, I am in no way in a position to express my opinions, but if I were I should not hesitate to stand up for what I considered right, even if it were to sever me from those I love best.

Yours faithfully,
E. R. W.

[Of course we publish the above letter. But it will be observed that our correspondent practically admits, and even proves, all the statements and conclusions made in the editorial remarks to which she refers.—
ED.]

DISTRICT NURSES v. GENERAL DRUDGES.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

MADAM,—It has been suggested that a few words upon the duties of district nurses for the sick poor might at the present juncture be of some public advantage. There is a somewhat confused and hazy idea prevailing in many quarters relating to the duties of a district nurse, which it will be wise to consider. People generally have very scant knowledge of the work that district nurses have to do, and many seem to think that when these nurses are called to tend the sick in dirty and filthy dwellings, it is their business to scrub and dust, and be general drudge, whilst the dirty, lazy people belonging to the house are squatting around, and not themselves raising a finger to help. A sort of housemaid drudge of the "Sairey Gamp" pattern is their ideal nurse. Thirty years ago Miss Nightingale sounded the death-knell of this type of nurse, and it would be a strange thing indeed, if, when we are striving to do honour to our Queen, we should desire to resurrect it over again. District nurses should be scrupulously cleanly both in person and in work. For how is it possible for any medical man to entrust his patients to the dirty fingers of dirty nurses? And how would it be possible for them to be otherwise, if they are to be always systematically employed in the doing of dirty work? Each of these nurses when in proper working will have to visit probably twenty or thirty houses in their working day. They will have to dress wounds, meet and assist the

doctors in taking on cases, in getting patients ready for operations, and assisting them in operations, and in helping the people to see that all the doctor's instructions are understood and carried out. For all these duties a strong, clear, active, trained intelligence is wanted. The most perfect cleanliness is essential; a sound technical training, not of a few weeks, as some have suggested, but of several years of varied work in different departments, under highly skilled superintendence, is necessary to make the thorough skilled and practical trained nurse. With nurses such as these, a nursing institution must be a great success. Every doctor would feel that such nurses were his first aid, and in every really serious case amongst the poor he would lose no time in securing their aid. Sairey Gamp he would not have at any price; she would ruin his best work, and kill his patient, though she might have plenty of energy, and would polish up the stove till he could see his face in it. I hope it will not be imagined that I think good nurses should be above doing any necessary work. No nurse, in my opinion, is fitted to do district work who would refuse to do any work of this kind if it became a necessity. But the use of a good skilled head in the sick room of the poor is to direct and combine the elements around, and turn them to useful purpose. To teach lessons of cleanliness and method and order which perhaps have never been taught before; to convert a pigsty into a clean and wholesome apartment, and give an object lesson to lookers-on upon those straight and simple methods which have brought about so speedily such comfort and blessing.

Will anyone tell me that such nurses will not be wanted by the poor? It is not such nurses as these that will ever want employment. They will ever be hailed as the best friends of the working poor, and wherever they go they will be met with respect and love.

It is the untrained nurse, the Sairey Gamp, who knows little, and thinks by asserting her dignity that she raises her order and inspires respect, who will be appreciated at her proper value, and for whose services the demand will be by no means exacting. It is greatly more important that these district nurses should be highly trained, than even the nurses for the rich, because there are many to overlook, and watch, and protect in the rich man's house, but in the house of the poor they are under much less supervision and restraints. The Queen gave all her jubilee offerings to put this district nursing upon the best possible footing, by providing a central organisation that would help the movement in the most practical way throughout the country. We have this institution to guide us and its rules to aid us, free of cost, if we choose to affiliate ourselves and reap the benefit. I have no doubt it will be done in the end—Why not begin on the best lines?

I am, Madam,
Yours faithfully,
SAMUEL KNAGGS.

Huddersfield,
May 21st, 1897.

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[next page](#)