

London, S.W., and cheques should be crossed Barclay and Co.

I am, yours faithfully,
F. EARDLEY WILMOT,
Secretary.

Deansgate, The Sanctuary, Westminster, S.W.
September, 1900.

ARE NURSES DISLIKED?

To the Editor of the "Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM,—The remark of Dr. John Campbell, quoted in your last issue, that "the average middle-class lady prefers to have a homely woman whom she likes rather than a thoroughly competent and well-trained nurse" to attend her in her confinement affords food for reflection for the nursing profession. Put into other words, it means that the average patient would rather risk death than have a trained nurse in the house. This is no exaggerated language, but plain, sober fact. In what is the "homely woman" so superior to us? It cannot be in knowledge or in education, in both of these we are her superior. The secret of her popularity is just, I believe, her homeliness. In perfectly plain language we make our superiority so plain that the patient is just a little afraid of asking such very superior persons to do the many little things that make all the difference to her comfort, and which she does not hesitate to ask the homely woman to perform. Then, again, the average nurse thinks that the patient (my patient she calls her in a tone that implies the invalid is her special personal possession) should have no will of her own, but should deliver herself up entirely to the beneficent control—and it really is for the most part beneficent—of her nurse. If the patient has a strong individuality of her own she does not understand why she should be expected to give it up because she happens to be ill, and friction results, sometimes over quite ridiculous trifles, but still to the detriment of the invalid. Thus, the patient has a fancy to have a glass of barley water left at her left hand side at night. Nurse thinks it would be so much better on the right, it is much easier to get at. True, incontestably, still the patient prefers it on the left. Nurse demonstrates lucidly and logically her reasons for placing it on the right. Patient, nearly in tears by this time, re-iterates she *prefers* it the other side, and nurse, if she is wise, gives in, though by now probably the patient's chance of a good night is seriously diminished. If she is not wise she thinks "it is a mistake to humour patients when they are manifestly in the wrong, you must begin as you mean to go on," and places the barley water on the right hand side, remarking patronisingly to the patient, she will find it better so, she (nurse) has had *great* experience, and patients in hospitals *always* have their drinks left on their right hand side. Then she "settles" the patient for the night—Oh yes, quite properly and conscientiously—and leaves her with the consciousness that she has "maintained her position" in the sick room, and has "not given way to fads." "Once you begin there is no end to them," she says. And the patient? Well she recognizes the skill of her nurse, and is grateful for her attentions, and the next time she is ill she sends for the "homely woman." Of course, there are nurses who possess and cultivate the

old fashioned virtue of homeliness. I have one in my mind as I write, and she is *never* out of a case, and has many more calls than she can respond to, but, take us as a class I believe we are so "smart" and "up-to-date" that we have discarded homeliness for accomplishments more in the fashion. Again, though we are, I believe, usually, devoted to the interests of our patient, we do not always make ourselves pleasant in the house, and servants are upset and tempers ruffled, and this again is a reason for dreading our arrival. Take us altogether, our intentions are excellent, and our capabilities exceptional, but our manners—well, to be quite frank—our manners are about the worst of any body of women I know, and it is by our manners that we are, to a great extent judged. This is no doubt at the bottom of the dislike very generally felt for nurses.

I am, Dear Madam,
Yours very truly,
OBSERVER.

THE ONLY LOGICAL LINE.

To the Editor of the "Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM,—I was so glad to see your advice to women on the subject of the coming General Election; it is the only logical line to take. The NURSING RECORD always rings true on this subject, and we have reason to be grateful to you. Indeed, I think my real interest in, and knowledge of, the woman question dates from the time I began to read the RECORD. I was groping in the dark before for something I wanted, but could not find, something for lack of which one's work was hindered. When I began to read your valuable paper, therefore, I was ripe for its teaching, and to-day, although it is all interesting to me, and the way it deals with questions from a professional point of view delights me, yet there is no part of it that I read with greater avidity than the woman column. I do not believe we shall get any "forrader" towards state registration, or the other reforms we want, until we have the vote and so can bring pressure, instead of influence—which is so often merely another name for scheming and wire-pulling—to bear upon Members of Parliament. At present we are concerned in gathering sand in our hands and letting it drip through our fingers, at least, I am afraid so. Wherefore no nurse who desires the organization and legal recognition of her profession can afford to be indifferent to the question of woman's suffrage.

I remain,
Dear Madam,
Yours gratefully,

ONE WHO HAS LEARNT MUCH FROM THE "NURSING RECORD."

[We have dealt with the question of the importance of the suffrage of women in our editorial remarks in this issue. Our views entirely correspond with regard to those expressed by our correspondent with regard to legislation in nursing matters. Reforms are only to be won by bringing pressure to bear politically. How can this be done while women are voteless, and therefore, a impotent political factor? Women will do well to throw all their energies into furthering their political enfranchisement. It will, in the end, be the shortest road to the legislation they desire for their own professions.—ED.]

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)