

Annotations.

FROM MAFEKING TO WINDSOR.

The Reverend Mother Superior Teresa and Sister Evangelist, who nursed sick and wounded in Mafeking throughout the siege are now in this country, and on Tuesday last by command of the Queen visited Windsor Castle. The Sisters were driven from Windsor station to the Castle in a Royal carriage and lunched with the Royal household after which they were received by the Queen in one of the drawing rooms. The Queen showed the keenest interest in the details of the story of the siege which the Sisters were able to give her, and asked many questions both with regard to it, and also to the care of the wounded. We can well imagine that Her Majesty is anxious to hear first hand accounts of the care which the sick and wounded received. Her Majesty's solicitude for the welfare of those who have suffered while fighting their country's battles is well known, and so many stories have reached home, of preventable suffering, and official blunderings, during the war, that the desire of many of her subjects to get at the real truth of the matter may well be shared by the Queen.

MATERNITY NURSE OR MIDWIFE?

A discussion as to the advisability of engaging a maternity nurse or a midwife to attend the sick poor of Rugby took place at a recent meeting of the Rugby District Nursing Association. Many important points were brought out in the course of the debate. The Hon. Mrs. Tower said that it was thought a maternity nurse would be a boon to the town, and this view was favoured by most of the medical men under certain rules. The basis on which their district nurses were established was "To give skilled nursing at home to cases unable to obtain it otherwise." The basis on which the maternity nurse should be worked should be "To provide skilled nursing for such as require a maternity nurse at the same average rate as they at present pay for untrained nurses." In the first case the nurses were supported by public subscription, in the second, except the initial expenses, the scheme should be self-supporting.

In answer to a speaker who said that she considered a certificated midwife acting under the doctor's instructions would be preferable to a maternity nurse, Mrs. Tower said there

would be absolute opposition to that from all the medical men. The opinion of six medical gentlemen had been taken. Five favoured a maternity nurse, but not a midwife, the sixth objected to the whole thing altogether and said it was not required. The object of the Association in promoting the scheme was to try to avoid the bad management of cheap and ignorant persons. There were constantly cases in the hospitals of patients suffering from sheer bad management. The first comment which occurs to us in connection with this proposal is that the Association does not realize the distinction between a maternity nurse and a midwife, and as a midwife has an imposing certificate bestowed upon her by the London Obstetrical Society, if, as is generally the case, she passes its examination, it is inclined to think that the latter is the more highly qualified woman. The medical men, on the contrary, know that a certificated midwife may only have had three months' experience, and they naturally object to a woman with this insufficient qualification being supported by the nursing association, and practically absorbing the midwifery practice of the town. Nurses have no means of registering their qualifications, and no legal status, but we desire to point out that a properly qualified maternity nurse must have, in addition to her general training, an obstetric qualification, and is, therefore, a more highly educated, and altogether safer person than the three months' midwife. She would work under medical direction, while competent to deal with emergencies if circumstances required it. But, it is proposed that this highly trained woman shall be available at the same rates of payment as a totally ignorant one, and here the Association has gone astray, and touched a labour question which it will be wise to leave alone. The fees commanded by such a nurse cannot be arbitrarily determined, but must be regulated by the value set upon her services by those whom she attends.

Lastly. If the scheme is to be a self-supporting one, why should not the poor of Rugby employ whom they choose, providing an efficient nurse is at work in the town. The richer classes who pay for what they require engage whoever they wish without dictation from charitable Associations and would justly resent any interference with their liberty of action. Why should not the self-respecting poor do likewise?

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