

by the Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland, were so received. Mr. Holland desires your readers and the War Office to believe that the Matrons' Council consists only of those seven ladies. The truth is that the Council comprises 120 matrons of hospitals throughout the United Kingdom, and a number of the leading hospital matrons in the Colonies and the United States as honorary members.

*Ex uno disce omnes.* The other statements made by Mr. Holland are equally devoid of foundation, and are, therefore, equally misleading. I prefer to make no comment as to Mr. Holland's purpose in publishing such statements, and, moreover, upon a matter with which he has no possible concern.

But may I avail myself, Sir, of this opportunity to urge the crying need of reforms being made at once in the conditions of Army nursing? There are grounds for believing that hundreds of valuable lives might have been saved in our present war if those conditions had been based on modern principles; and that, if the war continues, still further and equally unnecessary losses will be caused. Surely this is a matter above and outside all political considerations. It comes home to every one of us who have near and dear ones risking their lives for their King and country in that distant land, men who may at any moment be struck down by disease, who might easily have the same nursing care which is given to the poorest in England, but whose lives would be further endangered by the lack of such care and attention. It was to urge the institution of practical reforms for the saving of our soldiers' lives that the Matrons' Council sent its deputation to the War Office; and it received most courteous hearing. But it is the nation, after all, which must provide the motive force in every movement for reform. Is it too much to hope that Parliament will appoint a Select Committee to inquire into this vitally important matter? To-day it is the lives of our brave soldiers which are at stake. In the near future the matter may involve far greater issues. For voluntary service will be possible only so long as the soldiers and their womenkind are convinced that England appreciates their devotion and values their lives. To give the defenders of the Empire less than the best possible care when they are struck down in its service would be to give them not only less than they deserve, but less also than a generous and a grateful nation desires them to receive.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

ETHEL GORDON FENWICK (President of the International Council of Nurses), late Matron and Superintendent of Nursing to St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

20, Upper Wimpole Street, W., April 8th.

*To the Editor of The Times.*

SIR,—“Inaccurate,” “devoid of foundation,” “misleading,” was my letter, according to Mrs. Bedford Fenwick. But Mrs. Bedford Fenwick in her reply does not contend that the so-called “Matrons' Council” has on it, or amongst its constituents, any of the leading matrons of any of the hospitals of the United Kingdom, save St. Bartholomew's. And if the list of the hospitals represented were published, the absence of all the leading hospitals would establish what I wrote. She tells us, however, that “a number of the leading

hospital matrons in the colonies and the United States are amongst its honorary members.” This means nothing. They would doubtless be pleased and flattered to have been invited to join a body with so clever a title and energetic a president.

I am told by Mrs. Fenwick that the composition of the “Matrons' Council” is no concern of mine. I do not feel sure of that. I think it is the concern of any one interested in hospitals and nursing to do their best to prevent the opinions of a few from being taken as a representative opinion of the many, and especially so when one or more of the few may possibly be sent out by the “Matrons' Council” to the Nurses' Congress in America, and will, as a “member of the ‘Matrons' Council,’” be accepted as representing the opinions of the leading British hospitals on nursing questions.

The late Lord Delamere, Mr. Augustus Hare tells us, defined a deputation as “a noun of multitude which signifies many but not much.” But the deputation lately received by the War Office signified neither many nor much.

Yours faithfully,

SYDNEY HOLLAND.

44, Bryanston Square, April 10th.

*To the Editor of the Times.*

SIR,—Owing to my absence from town during the holidays I had no opportunity of seeing and answering Mr. Sydney Holland's attack upon the Matrons' Council, which appeared in your columns on the 4th inst. It was, however, so conclusively dealt with by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick that I need only ask your permission to answer Mr. Holland's second letter, which appeared in *The Times* yesterday morning.

It is quite evident that Mr. Holland assumes that the Matrons' Council is a society representative of hospitals and nurse-training schools—which is as illogical as it would be to argue that the British Medical Association or any other medical society represented the hospitals and medical schools to which the individual members of such bodies might happen to be attached. The Matrons' Council in like manner is essentially a society of hospital matrons associated together for the furtherance of professional purposes.

As if to emphasize his illogical position, Mr. Holland now admits that he has not seen a list of the members of the Matrons' Council; and yet in the same breath he asserts that he knows who is, and who is not, upon that list. As a matter of fact the Matrons' Council comprises amongst its members such well-known ladies as Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, president of the International Council of Nurses; Miss Isla Stewart, of St. Bartholomew's, the senior Royal hospital in the kingdom; Miss Huxley, of Dublin; the matrons of such important county hospitals as Leicester, Nottingham, Cambridge, Chester, Southampton, Bath, and Ipswich, and of a hundred others in this country; besides matrons in our colonies and, in the United States, whose names are household words in nursing circles all the world over.

In the face of such a membership, Mr. Holland's attempt to depreciate the influence of the Matrons' Council must be as futile as his statements have been proved to be inaccurate.

On the other hand, I am confident that there is not a single hospital matron in the United Kingdom de-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)