

of starvation remuneration, we have no hesitation in saying they would be able to obtain the services of as many qualified nurses as they require. Meanwhile, they employ women whose professional ignorance, coupled with their claim to be regarded as nurses, cannot but be held to be a source of future danger to the profession at large. That the work of these women is useful to their neighbours we are quite ready to admit. What we take exception to is the demand of those would-be philanthropists who sweat their labour that they shall be recognised as nurses, which they are not, rather than as the useful cottage helps which they are.

Annotations.

THE DIFFICULTIES OF COUNTY NURSING.

At the annual meeting of the Derbyshire County Nursing Association, held at St. Michael's Institute, Derby, under the presidency of Lady Laura Ridding, Miss Amy Hughes, Inspector of County Nurses for all England, gave an interesting address explaining the difficulties of the work and the need for its thorough organisation. We agree with Miss Hughes that it is necessary for nurses to receive some training in district nursing to fit them for this special work, for the nurse going straight from the wards of a well-equipped hospital to a rural district is apt to be "a fish out of water." Only we hold as a fundamental principle that all nurses should receive the least amount of hospital training compatible with efficiency, generally accepted as three years, before they take up special branches of work and before they are entitled to rank as nurses. For this is the point at issue in relation to County Nursing Associations. We do not for a moment affirm that they cannot provide women who are capable of rendering useful service in the cottages of the poor who have an elementary knowledge of nursing duties. But when these women claim the title of trained nurse they assume a position to which they have no right. A blacksmith is not permitted to describe himself as a dentist because he has attained some dexterity in extracting teeth; a butcher with a rudimentary knowledge of anatomy may not describe himself as a surgeon; and similarly a cottage help, or scrubber, who knows something of the elements of nursing, should not be permitted to describe herself as a trained nurse.

One point brought out by Miss Hughes was

that many of the County Nurses would come under the control and supervision of the Midwives' Act. Many of these County "Nurses" have had little training besides that of midwives, and it appears to us that it would be better if they acted and described themselves simply as midwives, which they are, rather than as nurses, which they are not.

THE INFECTED BLANKETS.

That there is a Providence which watches over fools and drunkards is universally believed; let us hope that the officials of the War Office are similarly guarded. It would appear so indeed, for Mr. Brodrick, in his statement in the House of Commons on the subject of the infected blankets scandal, said that "the General Officer Commanding in South Africa reports that in October last, owing to the rapid demobilisation of the troops, an enormous stock of unwashed general service blankets, returned to store by the troops on demobilisation, were stored at the Cape Town Ordnance Stores, stacked in the open under tarpaulin. Efforts were made to have these washed and properly stored, but meanwhile the stacks took fire by spontaneous combustion, and endangered the entire Ordnance depôt. Prompt action became imperative, and the chief ordnance officer gave instructions for large numbers of those in the worst condition to be destroyed by fire, and accepted tenders for the sale of 80,000, provided that they were removed within three days. These blankets were not unserviceable, although they had not been washed. The amount realised for the sale was £1,495."

We are therefore indebted to this timely fire for the fact that many more of these infected blankets have not been distributed over the country by "a thoughtful War Office." Mr. Brodrick made the further most astonishing statement: "I am not prepared to issue so wide an order as that all textile fabrics which have been used in the field should be disinfected before being sold." Well—we can only repeat our opinion expressed last week, that the sooner the nation realises the value of the services of women in departments dealing with domestic matters the better.

The Sanitary Committee of the Corporation of London, whose medical officer discovered the sale by the War Office in South Africa of the infected blankets, have written to the War Office suggesting that such instructions shall be issued as will render so regrettable an occurrence impossible in future.

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