

## Nursing Echoes.

\* \* \* *All communications must be duly authenticated with name and address, not for publication, but as evidence of good faith, and should be addressed to the Editor, 20, Upper Wimpole Street, W.*



An excellent article on the nursing question appears in last week's *Medical Times* (which also publishes at length the Bill drafted by the Society for the State Registration of Nurses), which ends with the hopeful words:—

“It may be regarded, therefore, as certain that the nursing question is now within the field of practical politics, that it will arouse a widespread public interest, and that Parliament will be prepared to deal with the subject on broad and comprehensive lines.”

The editorial staff of *St. George's Hospital Gazette* are evidently not in sympathy with the management of nursing matters. We observe little “pars.” in this journal which are not calculated to further discipline amongst the nursing staff. In the December issue we read:—

“We neither offer, nor think it needful to make, an apology for alluding to the hardship endured by the night nurses, who are compelled to attend chapel on Sunday morning at 10 a.m. The ordinary hours of labour are sufficiently long and arduous, without the necessity for converting the Sabbath into a day of work and compulsory religious observance. The health of our nursing comrades is surely worth some slight consideration, even if their wishes as to the time and places of worship can be disregarded. We commend this subject to the Chaplain's department for careful attention, and trust the New Year will witness a much-needed reform in this matter.”

Surely this is a matter easily arranged by the Matron, if the night nurses prefer to attend places of worship other than the hospital chapel when they are off duty.

We lately received information from a reliable source that attendance at morning chapel daily was compulsory for nurses and probationers on day duty at St. George's Hospital. But upon inquiry we were assured both by the Secretary-Superintendent and the Matron that this statement was “untrue,” and “that no compulsion in this matter had ever been, or was likely to be, enforced.”

Certificated nurses at St. George's are now distinguished by wearing “blue belts,” as at Bart's. A new badge has also been designed to distinguish the staff nurses.

One of the effects of the present unorganised condition of nursing work is the depreciation of the value of the services of skilled nurses in the open market. It is not pleasant to contemplate the fact that at least half the private nursing work in the metropolis is in the hands of unskilled women. Not pleasant, because of the consequent discomfort and suffering of the sick; and, further, because an occupation which affords equal facilities to the trained and the untrained cannot, and does not, attract the best type of workers, while the pecuniary value of their work must inevitably be depreciated.

In this connection may be noted the ever-increasing difficulty of obtaining three-guinea fees for nurses, in cases where such a fee might rightfully be expected. Nurses, although they expect to receive their full fees, do not, as a rule, collect their own, preferring to connect themselves with some society which undertakes this duty for them; they therefore are slow to realise the increasing reluctance with which the public pay the amount asked. We should be the last to desire nurses to exhibit a mercenary spirit, but they must realise that the laws governing their remuneration are founded on an industrial basis, that their earnings are governed by the law of supply and demand, and that there is only work for a certain number.

The past year, we are glad to say, seems to have been an exceptionally healthy one. General practitioners assert that the average of the sickness is about two-thirds of that of an ordinary year, and nursing of course follows in the wake of medicine; therefore, many nurses have had spells of inaction, and complain of the congestion of their profession. If they will consider for a moment, they will find their ranks are congested, not by the trained but by the unskilled workers. But the consequence is the same: the value of their labour in the open market is lowered.

And, as a result, women of the best and brightest intelligence are constantly gravitating to other professions where their work is more remunerative, instead of to nursing, to the grievous loss of the latter. We could mention several clever and capable trained nurses who have relinquished nursing for work in which they find themselves in a congenial environment and where they can obtain better remuneration for the labour of their brains; and on all sides Matrons of training-schools are asserting that the most desirable women no longer apply in large numbers for training as probationers, and that they are obliged to make the best of second-rate material.

The lesson is plain. Our profession is not congested with women who physically, professionally, and personally are all that can be desired. The

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