

**THE**  
**BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING**  
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED  
**THE NURSING RECORD**  
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 992.

SATURDAY, APRIL 6, 1907.

Vol. XXXVIII.

**Editorial.**

PROFESSIONAL EVOLUTION.

One of the most remarkable developments of the last half century has been that of the profession of nursing and the uprising of the Superintendent of the Nurse Training School. We well remember when visiting the Nottingham General Hospital many years ago the dictum of the medical officer at that time that the "place of the Matron was amongst the blankets," and in order to find the dear lady we had to descend to the basement where we discovered her surrounded by a halo of fluff. In those days the Matron was regarded as housekeeper only, and her "encroachment" into the nursing department bitterly resented.

But male domination over the personal discipline of women nurses proved an unqualified failure, as it always has done and always will. It was not until it was made clear to the medical officers of hospitals that, while in the treatment of the sick they were absolute, yet in matters concerning the discipline of the nursing staff they must report any dereliction of duty to the Matron, who was also to be recognised as Superintendent of Nursing, and then leave her to deal with the matter, and "no further meddle therein," that progress was made. Trained nurses imbued with the professional spirit were appointed Matrons of hospitals, and they, desirous of the good name and honour of the work in which they were engaged, gathered round them women like minded with themselves, and by degrees eliminated the low type of nurse who was a discredit to her calling, and had inflicted an untold amount of needless suffering upon the sick and dying.

But, even now, the Matrons of some of

our largest training schools have not yet realised their position as heads of educational departments, and as leaders of the nurses working under them. They do not assume the position of chief nurses, but of members of a class apart, and, surrounded by mystery, are far removed from the pupils who will become the Matrons of the future. They object to co-operation, and, by yearly letters, discourage their former probationers from realising their personal responsibility to their profession, and when a question of national importance such as that of the State Registration of Nurses comes before Parliament, these ladies range themselves on the side of lay proprietors of hospitals who for the most part do not understand educational or nursing questions; what they do understand is that nurses are their paid servants, whom they are determined to keep unorganised, so that they may not have power to help themselves. Progress must be a matter of privilege.

Twenty years ago this attitude on the part of Matrons was more comprehensible, but now, when the hospitals are turning out, yearly, hundreds of well-educated certificated nurses, to claim to be a leader, and at the same time to refuse to lead, is an entirely untenable position. The Superintendent of a training school should be the first nurse in it, and the educational and professional status of nurses of primary concern to her, because the nursing in the wards of the hospital will naturally suffer if these are defective. She can no longer side with the lay employer of nurses when his decrees are injurious to their professional interests and economic independence. The Matron of the present day has to choose whom she will serve, herself, by dissociating herself from her class, or the great body of her profession by associating herself with it.

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