

Professional Review.

THOU SHALT DO NO MURDER.

Under the above heading the Hon. Albinia Brodrick contributes to the current issue of the *Fortnightly Review* one of the most dramatic and trenchant pleas for State Registration of trained nurses which has ever been penned. She writes in part:—"There are times when one is forced to wonder how it comes to pass that the world was, intellectually at least, born blind. And still more, how persistently, carefully, and successfully it elects to remain blind, more particularly in those matters which most nearly concern itself."

One class "needs a surgical operation to open the eyes; the other half dare not see, because they fear the light of truth; and the third half, as the Irishman said, will not see, lest the sight should force them to action.

"Some of us, once amongst the blindest, have painfully gained sight and insight in those pregnant hours when we realised that, under God, in the silent night, we held literally between our hands the life of a fellow-man, sometimes of three or four. As those hours wore on, when a moment's carelessness must mean the death of the would-be suicide, when a failure to notice the blanched lips calling for instant restoratives, might turn the balance by even so little on the wrong side of the scale, when the neglect of a feeble cry for 'Nurse' might put it beyond our power to give help for ever; when, above all, in the awful moment of maternity, the existence of both child and mother hung upon instant decision and courageous action; then, and in the hours of re-action which followed, the eyes of our understanding have been opened, and whereas we were blind, now we see.

"I cannot write in any sense conventionally upon this subject of nursing. It does not lend itself to conventional treatment. Neither do I desire to do so, since through my profession it is that I have won to mental freedom, with which is bound up the dear comradeship with all who suffer, the great right, and in some measure, I hope, the science to help the helpless.

"I propose to draw aside some part of that curtain which hides the life of nursing from the public view. A part only, for if I told all I know I must inevitably either substantiate my facts or be writ down a liar. . . . In speaking of nurses we are dealing with a large body of women drawn from every class of society, of every variety of character and temperament, of differing races. They have embraced their profession for reasons which vary as greatly as does their character, or the colour of their hair or eyes." Amongst these reasons are step-mothers, disappointment in love, unhappiness at home, a desire for independence, loss of fortune, and again there are "those who could do nothing else." Lastly, Miss Brodrick says, "I have not exhausted reasons, but must pass on finally to those who come to nursing 'out of an honest and good heart' for love of God and of their neighbour, and who find in it not only a profession but a vocation. These are the salt of the earth. I give them silent homage. They know, as I know, the agony through

which they passed to attain their goal. Not that they count themselves to have attained.

"'Thou shalt do no murder,' the simplest, most primitive morality embraced in the elementary ethics of the nurse's training. Doubtless. But the training (sic) of the average nurse is superbly innocent of ethics. Here our American sisters, our splendid rivals in nursing, and our French sisters, the latest recruits amongst enlightened nurses, alike show us the way. Ethics as a foundation is taught in their nursing curriculum. But not in ours. 'Thou shalt obey the doctor's orders' briefly summarises the ethical training of the 'complete nurse' in 95 per cent. of our so-called training schools. In some it does not amount to that.

Miss Brodrick points out that she is trying to voice facts known to all of us, but that only a nurse who occupies an entirely independent position can afford to tell. She proceeds to give instances of a few of the cases "in which the law 'Thou shalt do no murder' has been transgressed." Either these cases have been in the papers as the result of inquiries, or are personally known to her. They include:—

1. A deliberate lie, told by a nurse, the direct result of which was the death from operation of a patient.

2. The neglect by a nurse of the lunatic ward, and consequent suicide of a patient.

3. The administration by a nurse of opium to a young infant. Death of infant.

4. Neglect of a case of severe hæmorrhage because the nurse "did not like to wake the house surgeon." Result, death.

5. Turning on of a hot-water tap in the bath. Scalding and consequent death of patient.

6. Refusal to report to the doctor a doubtful case. Death from typhoid of the patient.

7. Roughness in bed-making. Immediate death of the patient from heart attack.

8. Roughness, despite remonstrance, in moving a patient for the bed-pan. Death within ten minutes from hæmorrhage.

9. The nurse absent from the ward. Death of a delirious—not lunatic—patient from drinking a poisonous lotion left standing in the ward.

10. Neglect of aseptic precautions in child-birth. Death of the mother from sepsis.

11. Suicide of a lunatic under the nurse's eyes, with the nurse's own scissors left beside the patient despite the suicidal mania being known.

12. Puerperal infection conveyed to a maternity case by the nurse. Death of the patient.

13. Murder of an infant by a nurse—its mother.

Are these instances sufficient? asks Miss Brodrick. Add to them the long list of medicines wrongly administered, of abortions procured, of sepsis introduced by the nurse, all resulting in the death of the patient. These, she points out, are merely the known cases. "What about those which are occurring daily throughout this most Christian country, of which we see and hear nothing?" She instances district nursing, especially in country places, where, with the doctor miles away, so much responsibility rests on the nurse. "If she is a first-rate nurse and a capable woman she may win

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