

Nursing Echoes.

*** All communications must be duly authenticated with name and address, not for publication, but as evidence of good faith.*



Truth of the 11th inst. publishes the following notes which we reprint in full as the matter is one of great importance to the profession of Nursing in general, and to the Indian Army Nursing Service in particular:—

“I have been asked by several ladies connected with the Nursing profession to give publicity to the following confidential circular recently issued from Simla. It certainly appears to merit all the publicity that can be given to it:—

Army Head-quarters, India, Medical Division,
Simla, September 13, 1893.
[Confidential.]

To the Lady Superintendent, Indian Nursing Service.
.....Circle.

DEAR MISS—,—An instance having recently occurred of a lady Nurse taking part in station theatricals, it appears to the Commander in Chief in India expedient that his views on the subject of recreation for members of the Indian Nursing Service should be communicated to them.

His Excellency is aware that the life in public of lady Nurses in India is observed with much interest by a very highly influential section of Home Society which earnestly desires the success of the Indian Nursing Service, and he is anxious the impression should not arise or exist that the lady Nurses have not taken up with serious purpose the important avocation they perform.

Recreation is undoubtedly essential to the health of mind and body, particularly in India, which places so much climatic stress upon the European constitution. Gymkhana and race meetings, garden parties and At Homes, for instance, provide cheerful relaxation, and do not tax those energies which nursing duty calls into play. But dances and other night entertainments are scarcely compatible with sedulous personal care of the sick, and appearances on the stage bring Nursing Sisters into very undesirable public prominence.

Sir George White feels sure the lady Nurses will defer to his opinion, and allow him to dispense with the issue of formal orders restricting latitude in recreative pursuits.—Believe me, yours sincerely,
A. F. BRADSHAW,
Surgeon-Major-General, Principal Medical Officer, India.”

* * *

“A more foolish document than this was never penned. The vocation of Hospital Nurses is either a quasi-religious one, which renders it improper for them to take part in public entertainments of any kind, or a lay profession in which they have a right to participate in all amusements which are open to other ladies. The distinction which the Commander-in-Chief and the Principal Medical Officer attempt to set up between day and night entertainments is simply childish in its absurdity. According to this novel code of ethics, it is wrong for a lady Nurse to go out to dinner, but right for her to attend a race meeting; right for her to skip about at a lawn tennis party, but wrong for her to dance a quadrille in the evening. And,

apparently, an afternoon dance would be lawful, while tennis, if it could be played in the evening by electric light, would be forbidden. “Appearances on the stage” are forbidden, whether in the morning or the evening. The Nurse must not even act at a matinée. But why? “Publicity,” says the P.M.O., “is undesirable for Nursing Sisters.” Why more for them than for other Sisters?”

* * *

“The most wonderful thing in the circular, however, is his Excellency’s anxiety lest an impression should arise in “a very influential circle of Home Society” that the Nurses have not taken up their duties “with serious purpose.” Are we to understand from this, although dancing and theatricals are usual amusements among all classes, and although Princes and Princesses think nothing of performing before the Queen, “a very influential circle” considers that these amusements are incompatible with a serious purpose in life? If so, more arrant humbug was never uttered. I expect, however, that this impressive reference to influential circles at home is just the same undiluted nonsense as the rest of the circular. If Sir George White or Surgeon-Major General Bradshaw desires to convert the Indian Nursing Service into a religious order, let them do the thing openly and thoroughly, and with due regard to the rights and vested interests of those ladies who have entered the Service supposing it to be something very different. Either that, or the circular should be withdrawn at once.”

* * *

WE venture to differ entirely from our contemporary, and, indeed, would dare to believe that the writer of the paragraphs, which we have quoted, is almost unacquainted with the subject upon which he expresses such perfervid sentiments. He is, evidently, unaware of the fact that a Nurse’s work involves such ministrations that it is imperative upon her to maintain her professional position towards her patients with the most scrupulous care. And, if her position is difficult in this way in England, it is rendered a hundred times more difficult when she is Nursing, almost alone, in one of the great Indian Army Camps. For her own sake, for the good name of her profession, and, above all, for the sake of her duties, it is then essential that she should ever display the utmost sobriety of conduct. With reference to evening entertainments, it is also certain that a Nurse cannot, in India, take part in these and yet perform her duties efficiently, the following day. We are convinced that all the real Nurses in the Indian Army Service will agree with us that Dr. BRADSHAW’s circular is eminently necessary and wise, and that it would be well for the Service if *Truth’s* correspondents—who wished publicity given to a confidential letter—sent in their resignations without any further loss of time.

* * *

It has been an open secret in nursing circles at home for some time, that a few Nurses have been sent out to India as Sisters, who, by birth, education,

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)