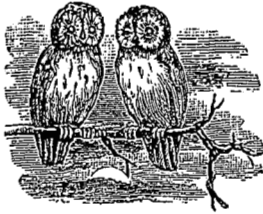


Matrons in Council.

WHAT IS A TRAINED NURSE?



DEAR MADAM,—I have read, with much interest, the incisive remarks of Miss Josephine de Pledge in your issue of the 3rd inst. on the above subject; and I have lived long enough to have heard the same arguments advanced over and over again, viz.: that mere "cram" never did, nor never will, perfect a Nurse. Nor can we feel surprised, that in the vexation of their spirit, Matrons have cried aloud for common-sense over "exams." that would be absolutely "staggering" in their effects upon their minds, were they not so often utterly futile in their results and in the wards.

Are we to infer, then, that "science" is to blame for these frequent breakdowns in Nursing candidates? I cannot quite accept this view of the subject, and even venture to assert that knowledge is a higher thing than common-sense, and that the natural outcome of *theory* should be superlatively good *practice*. Then why, it may be asked, is it not so, as a rule, rather than the exception? Because, in the humble judgment of the writer, we are apt to overlook a simple, but momentous consideration, that the higher attributes that go to make a good Nurse are due to a *natural aptitude* for the work, commonly called a "turn" for Nursing, or, as I would more reverently put it, a gift of God, to be exercised for the good of His sick. No cram can kindle this "celestial fire," nor quench it, but knowledge does add immeasurably to its blessed influence much to the comfort of poor suffering humanity.

But how are we to discover who has or who has not this gift of Nursing in a crowd of candidates? We cannot, except in the wards, which are to a tyro what the Proof House is to a gun—hundreds are found wanting under the test, and the Master rejects them as worthless weapons.

The "ministering spirit" is the true spirit of Nursing, and it should be the tendency of all our knowledge, all our power, to evoke or exalt it. "This quality of mercy" is more found, perhaps, in home-cultured women, in whom womanly sympathy and *womanly usefulness* are a part of their daily lives; but all women can cultivate or strive for it, and they who fail therein, have mistaken their vocation when they adopted the Nursing profession, for it will afford them no pleasure, nor bring them any abiding reward.

—Yours truly,
MARIAN HUMFREY.

MADAM,—I [was very pleased to read, under the heading "Matrons in Council," Miss de Pledge's letter of Feb. 3rd, and to see that at last some one had written from the *Nurse-Pro's* view of the question now being discussed. Hitherto the tendency has been to advance views, which, if carried out, would tend to the practical exclusion from the Nursing profession of the future, of any but lady Pros., or rather, perhaps, well-off women—thus society would lose the benefit of the trained services of a very useful class of women.

I am not one of those who object to lady Nurses, far from it; I think it one of the most useful callings in life a lady can follow, but why should they monopolize it? and, tacitly, by compelling the necessity for an expen-

sive education, reject their poorer sisters, simply because they cannot afford the same educational advantages. Surely there is room for all, and a place each can fill. It is not likely, neither is it to be desired that a Nurse who is not a thoroughly well-educated woman, should be advanced to the highest ranks of the profession, but there is no reason why she should not be a good, useful, much valued Nurse, thoroughly understanding the work required of her, and implicitly obedient in carrying out all directions given her; which, I take it, is one of the very first duties every Nurse should learn. A good plain education is undoubtedly essential for all; and *that* girls who are educated in a national or board school get, or they cannot pass the examinations demanded by Government; reading, writing a good hand, arithmetic and tables, are so insured, besides the extra subject now taught which forms useful knowledge for all; this is different to a really scientific training which is not within the reach of all, and is scarcely, I take it, *absolutely necessary before* entering the wards of a Hospital to learn Nursing; it is useful no doubt to those within whose reach it is, and a distinct advantage to them, but theory or an aptitude for its acquirement will not make a *Nurse*, or ensure any one, however clever in "book learning," ever being a good, gentle, patient attendant on the sick, and if a large and comprehensive knowledge of theory is insisted on before admission can be obtained for Hospital training, I fear many most capable women would be debarred from a most useful calling. My experience with Nurse-Pros. leads me to think they learn the theory of their profession much quicker *after* some practical experience; for instance, the names of the various bones of the body may be learnt parrot fashion, but are far more easily mentally arranged and applied to the bones to which they belong after practical experience in the wards. Personally, I find in giving lectures to my Nurses I can make them understand and enter into their lesson best by illustrations from cases we have had in, exemplifying what I am trying to teach them; the circulation and the course of the alimentary canal are far more easily understood if so taught, and venous and arterial hæmorrhage are grasped at once in this manner.

A highly educated woman is undoubtedly essential for the higher posts in the profession, for management, general superintendence and teaching others, but I deny a high class education being essential for all Nurses; of course, those who rise to the higher ranks must begin at the beginning, but they naturally have ambition so to rise from the first, and would be little content to keep in the humbler ranks always, whereas women of good plain education, after Hospital training, make good Nurses, and are content as such, and to remain in the humbler ranks of the profession.

The moral character and disposition of a woman is surely one of the most important qualifications. I fear many Pros. and Nurses, alas! are taken without sufficient care as to the genuineness of their credentials; giddy, flighty young women, whether able to pass scientific examinations or not, are not suitable for Hospital Nurses.—Yours faithfully,

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