

and they should consider very carefully what is the end in view in promoting training of so high a character. What, in short, is to become of the increasing number of women who receive such prolonged and skilled training? The answer is given that they are to furnish the Matrons, Nursing Superintendents, and Ward Sisters of the future. He confessed he did not see any large field for many such women. It may be well to produce them, but how are they to gain their living? The public are ready with complaints of the expense of a Trained Nurse. He did not think a Trained Registered Nurse was at all overpaid; on the contrary, she is often underpaid. Still, it must be remembered her services come in many instances as a heavy additional cost in illness, and the scale of remuneration for private cases is now as high as can well be borne. They had to face the question of Nursing as adapted to the means of large classes of the community who cannot afford one half the ordinary charges per week expected by a competent fully-trained Nurse; and they must bear in mind that the public must decide the matter. The public will only have such Nurses as it wants, and of a kind it can afford to pay. Thus there is a limit to the employment of the highest Trained Nurses. Could they, under such circumstances, and looking at the matter from the broadest, statesmanlike point of view, apart from jealousy, prejudice, or rivalry, recognise a lower grade of Nurse?

Must they entirely discourage the work of the hundreds who never can attain to this high standard? To those who would reply in the affirmative he would ask how the services of the most highly cultured are to be secured for the poor of certain rural and urban districts. As a member of the Council of the Queen's Jubilee Institute for Nurses, he knew that they could not avail themselves of their services; at present the splendid work achieved by this Institute was done by women whom the Royal British Nurses' Association could not register.

They were told that as much instruction can in two years be obtained in some Institutions, as in others it would take three years to obtain, and he was not prepared to deny it. At any rate the medical men employing these Nurses were satisfied with their work, and the medical men after all must have the last word. He saw difficulties in the way, but he thought something might be done to establish two or three grades of sick Nurses, and a varying remuneration according to their training. This would require no less than State recognition of all Nurses. It was no use looking to the public in such an effort any more than they would look to the public in respect to medical men. The matter, together with the very pressing one of the organisation and regulation of Midwife Nurses, may well engage the attention of Government.

Passing then to the relation of Nurses to medical men, the lecturer said he had an unpleasant matter to treat, but he ventured to tell it out. It is sometimes found that the highly-trained Nurse is tempted to pass out of her proper sphere of duty and to take up responsibilities that do not belong to her. Medical practitioners in London, and especially in the country, tell of interference, and of a patient's trust and confidence shaken by highly-trained Nurses, and they declare a preference to have their patients nursed by women of lesser pretensions. These complaints come not from unimportant medical men, but often from those of eminence in their respective districts. Such

charges are very serious, and cannot be passed by. He, the lecturer, always replied to them by expressing the opinion that Nurses guilty of such misconduct must have been imperfectly trained. As they knew, a Nurse placed in charge of a patient is expected to carry out the doctor's orders with implicit obedience and exactitude. The point driven home in all good schools of Nursing is that a Nurse should keep her own opinions to herself, and not discuss ailments or matters relating to the medical man with the patient she is in charge of. The mischief that can be done by an opinionated disobedient Nurse is incalculable, and he had come across serious examples of it. He pronounced those guilty of such conduct as bad and unworthy Nurses.

Then there were some Nurses nowadays who appear to regard themselves as sufficiently qualified to practise any branch of medicine or surgery, and who flaunt their long Hospital experience by the bedside of convalescent patients. This is silly enough, but it is also mischievous folly. He did not know what lady doctors thought about it, perhaps they would give their opinion, but all he could say was that if Nurses are dissatisfied with the sphere of a Nurse's duty, they had better begin to study medicine and become qualified practitioners, for there is no place for them amongst the women whom doctors regard, and alone will employ, as properly trained Nurses. This led him to remind Nurses generally that their relation to the doctor is one of subservience.

Nurses cannot exist or force themselves into any position in the body politic without the guidance or favour of medical men. Let that be fully understood; they could not, and would not be permitted if they could, to organise themselves into a body, independent of the medical profession.

He had been speaking of some ugly things, but he felt sure he would not be misunderstood. He had done so in the best interest of those without whom medical men could not achieve so much as they did.

While speaking of the Modern Trained Nurse, he could not pass over the great advantages they derived from the prestige given them by the Royal British Nurses' Association, its badge being a passport to not only their training and Nursing qualifications, but their high character as well; and in time they may have still greater advantages to offer. They were still a young body, but with the untiring solicitude of their Royal President, they had done a very great deal.

There was some difference of opinion as to the relative merits of metropolitan and provincial schools. Some assert that a small country Hospital offers the best training to a Nurse, as many duties fall to her which in a large establishment are given to the clerks and dressers. He absolutely differed from this view. What right has a Nurse to do work that belongs to the medical officer and students? That is not proper Nurse training, for the Nurse is thus deprived of learning her own business. Thus it is that friction is set up between doctors and Nurses. Amongst the advantages of training in large Hospitals is that the probationers and Nurses can be supervised by a Matron of high character and attainments—a mistress of her art, who should always be a kind though firm, motherly sort of person, free from all infirmities of temper and from all fads. To work under such a woman, and they knew many such, was a privilege not too readily procurable, and it should be valued

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)