

matter, and not to be settled with the easy-going dictum one hears applied to such teaching—"If it does not do any good it cannot do them harm," or the equally misapplied notion that "any lecturer can teach those ignorant women something they don't know."

I have had some experience with village folk, and I believe if they have opportunities of hearing good lectures, they will attend the classes and profit by the instruction. They may not flock to the first course, they are often suspicious of anything new, and like to hear from the more adventurous ones who come what it is all about, and whether it is for the "likes of them."

So that in the county in which I am now living, I try to ascertain what is done in the way of Technical Education, and make a point of attending some of the classes and inducing others to do the same. And I have been deeply disappointed with the poor qualifications of two of the lecturers on Sick Nursing engaged by the Herts Technical Education Association. The first one I heard was a bright woman, a good speaker and a fairly good lecturer—so much so, that I was sorry to find out that she belonged to the large army of sham Nurses, had had no proper training as a Nurse, but had been through the stereotyped Ambulance course, and was repeating in a clever parrot-like manner what she had heard in the so-called "training school," as though there can be any training school for a Nurse but the bedside of the patient. But it was well done. Perhaps if I had not known anything of Nursing I should not have discovered her. She is worthy of better things, and I should be glad if she learns the error of her ways and goes through the necessary training to fit her for the work that, with such training, I believe she would be well fitted for. But as it is, her lectures are of no practical value—*she cannot say how the knowledge should be applied*. That is just what the class-room and the text-books cannot teach her, so that although the audiences are good and appear interested, not one can go home with a fact to apply to the sick depending on them. She is an able Ambulance pupil, but not a Nurse.

The other lecturer was hopelessly and helplessly ignorant of her subject; it would take a good deal of training to make her a Nurse or a lecturer, and she had had none. She had been through an Ambulance Course—they all do it!—and as she naively admitted to a friend of mine, she had also been on a visit to a convalescent home! That was the "training" she had gone through to fit her to teach an audience of working women, with all their time-honoured superstitions and ignorances, the art of nursing their sick.

Nor was she trained in speaking. She had her lecture books on the table and referred to them frequently, but she did not herself know what the extracts meant, and read them as puzzles. Nor were the practical illustrations more successful—the poultice she made was like a batter pudding. I think she saw it was not quite right, and hastened to explain that "in all cases it was safe to put a poultice between the shoulders," and she was right with regard to this particular poultice. As a pillow it would have been comfortable enough.

A second illustration showed that such a lecturer *can* "do harm even if she does no good," because she dealt with Nursing a child suffering from bronchitis, in which case she advised that a kitchen-table be converted into a four poster bedstead, the child placed under the table, and a steam-kettle allowed to steam on to the helpless child beneath.

Now this notion troubled me a good deal, and I thought of some poor little thing being nursed on the floor—a most draughty place—underneath a table, until I was rendered sleepless over the matter, when it suddenly occurred to me that what the lecturer ought to have driven at was to make an *inverted* table into a cradle, place it on a bed or another table, hang curtains round it, and nurse the child under the improvised tent. I do not know how this notion would answer, the lecturer did not suggest it nor hint at it, but it occurred to me later that perhaps she had read of it or heard of it and failed to grasp what was meant. That is where these text-book-taught pupils fail. They have never done

the things for sick people themselves, they have only "heard tell of them," and in repeating what they have heard, memory or comprehension fails and they make disastrous blunders.

I quite agree with your correspondents that the County Councils must learn to be more careful in their selection of Technical Education teachers, but I am afraid that until women are on the County Councils it will be difficult to eradicate the masculine notion that any well-meaning woman can Nurse or teach Nursing.

It is only fair to the County Council of this district to say that one of their lecturers is a properly qualified Nurse, and as it was stated in the local press, a member of the Royal British Nurses' Association, but in my locality we were not very fortunate, and I trust the attention called to the matter will result in lessening the numbers of sham Nurses engaged as lecturers. I enclose my card, and the names of the two ladies I refer to for your private information, and am,

Truly yours,
DISBELIEVER IN SHAMS.

WOMEN LECTURERS.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

MADAM,—I have read the account of the conference held at 53, Berners Street, to consider the position and qualification of Women Lecturers.

Why, I should like to ask, did not these enterprising persons take also into their deliberations the position of some other professional body? So far as I can see, they would have had just as much right to meet together to organise for women artists—or for the matter of that, men auctioneers or any other calling—as for Women Lecturers. It did not transpire that they had any *locus standi* for meeting to discuss the standard of competence the lecturers must reach, nor the limitation of the fees they should receive, since the ladies and gentlemen assisting at the conference were not delegated to do so by Women Lecturers. Up to the present, the training schools supplying Women Lecturers have not yet earned public confidence sufficiently to enable them to lay down rules for a standard of efficiency, so that of the three ladies representing such societies, Miss Lankester was the only one in a position to speak with authority, and Miss Lankester evidently did not consider the meeting sufficiently representative to be tempted to express her views. And she was the one who best understood the question. Mrs. Percy Boulnois has taken an active part in women's questions in Liverpool and is an eloquent and clever speaker, but she is not a teacher, nor a professional woman at all. Dr. Wynter Blyth is a name respected in medical and legal circles, but I cannot learn that he is in any way connected with Women Lecturers. Dr. Schofield, though he undertakes to lecture to ladies on their health and underclothing and other matters, is not, properly speaking, a Woman Lecturer.

It is therefore erroneous to suppose that these ladies and gentlemen, however well-meaning their intentions may be, can do anything in the matter. They have no *locus standi*, and can no more speak for Women Lecturers than the tailors of Tooley Street could speak for the people of England.

The sum total of the conference is this—a very interesting conversation with ladies and gentlemen whom it would be a great pleasure to meet either collectively or individually; but the question of Women Lecturers remains exactly as it was before, and can neither be retarded nor advanced by any number of conferences in which the persons most concerned—the Women Lecturers themselves—do not take part.

Sincerely yours,
A WOMAN LECTURER.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)