

AN experienced Member of the Royal British Nurses' Association, who has held the positions of Sister and Matron, writes from Cape Town:—

"Since I came here I have made many enquiries about Nursing and Nurses, and so far as I can discover it is much the same here as in other Colonies, and that is, that the experienced English-trained woman is a waste product. She is expected to turn her hand to anything and everything, no matter what her credentials may be. She is supposed to take midwifery, surgical, and medical work, and does it to make a living, though I suppose, at least I hope so, that her own heart condemns her for being so selfish—for allowing her fellow women to run such a risk in a climate like this.

The trained Englishwoman can command no higher fees than a coloured woman who has never had a week's training in her life, and who does as little as she can of Nursing, but does not object to the rougher work, which is her rôle. Several English Nurses I have met here assure me that their lives are spent in working eighteen to twenty hours in charge of a sick person, when they have a case; and wearing themselves out with anxiety when not engaged, wondering where the money is to come from to pay for lodging and the necessaries of life, which are all costly here. 'I have not had a case for seven weeks,' a Nurse told me the other day, and the poor thing looked ill and worn with anxiety. Unfortunately there are many like her, and in the interest of these poor women I do beseech you to discourage others from coming to South Africa to swell the ranks of the unemployed. It does not matter in the least that one holds the certificate of the Royal British Nurses' Association, in fact I think you are better liked if you have no credentials at all, but have just picked up a little Nursing and are not too particular about dirt and evil smells.

I have had two cases since I came here; in both I had to work eighteen to twenty hours a day, with no one to relieve me for a few hours while I took exercise in the open air. The only anxiety felt about me was that, if I did not get a few hours' sleep, I should break down, and leave the patient to be nursed by the family. Of course I *did* break down after five weeks of such severe strain in each case. The first time my patient, an old gentleman, died, so I took a week in bed myself, and gradually rested. The second case I gave up after five weeks, and although I have been idle one month, I am still suffering from nervous exhaustion.

I had an appointment offered me to head a small Convalescent Home—a Matronship it was called. The position in reality was that of a working housekeeper under a secretary, who made the rules and defined the duties. The woman in charge had to take her meals with the patients, nurse them when sick, and amuse them in the evenings. I declined the position, as I never take office where the performance of the duties is an impossibility—a fiasco under such circumstances is inevitable."

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Medical Matters.

THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON VACCINATION.



THIS body, which was appointed more than seven years ago, has at last presented its Report. The great delay which has occurred has been undoubtedly productive of harm to the public at large, because many local authorities have hesitated to put the

existing laws in force to compel vaccination while the subject was being investigated by a Royal Commission. To this fact may be ascribed, perhaps, the serious outbreaks of small-pox which have occurred in various towns, and most recently in Gloucester, where the neglect of, and the strenuous opposition to, the Vaccination Acts, caused a large section of the population to be defenceless against an outbreak of the disease. It is to be hoped that Parliament will, next Session, pass an Act embodying the chief suggestions made by the Royal Commissioners, and which are, for the most part, accepted by the medical profession. The most debateable point in their conclusions relates to the enforcement of repeated penalties. Hitherto, under the existing law, a parent could be fined again and again for not complying with the Act and causing his children to be properly vaccinated. The Commissioners admit that this provision may have made some parents obey the law, but they argue that when the parents object upon strong personal, and even conscientious, grounds to their infants being vaccinated, repeated fines only cause greater antagonism to the law. They therefore believe that less stringent compulsion would cause less irritation in such cases, and might even increase, rather than diminish, the number of children who are vaccinated. The argument is by no means conclusive, because it is purely theoretical, and indeed strongly reminds us of that advanced by Cobden, Villiers, and others, in advocating Free Trade—that every other nation would follow England in such a manifestly beneficial step. Sixty years have passed, but other nations continue to flourish, although they obstinately decline to accept English trade theories, and, under the same system, the backbone of our home industry—Agriculture—has been practically broken, while other trades are following it dismally downhill. We are, therefore, by no

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