

and the mere fact that the Council sanctioned such a retrograde principle without one word of discussion proves not only the inability of the Council to protect the interest of Nurses, but also the serious responsibility which the officials have taken in packing the governing body of the Corporation with persons who are unable to express the views of the Nursing profession, or rightly to advise Her Royal Highness, the President, upon matters of vital importance to all Trained Nurses. But injustice always recoils, as it has done in this case, sooner or later, upon those who act unjustly.

It appears to me, and to many others also, that—as nothing is to be hoped for either from the Executive Committee, or from the General Council, and as the degradation of the Register of the Royal British Nurses' Association is vitally injurious to the Nursing profession, and dangerous to the public, whom it was intended to protect—we should hold a meeting as soon as possible to call the attention of the public to the present position of affairs in the Association, and to clear the hands of those who object, from complicity in this scheme.

I have received assurances of sympathy from a number of leading Matrons and Nurses, and venture, through your columns, to ask those who sympathise with my suggestion, to communicate with me at the address below given.

I suggest that the meeting should be held in the first week in January at a public hall in London, and I shall be glad to know the views of your readers on this matter if they will kindly communicate with me.

A strong Committee is being formed to make the necessary arrangements for this meeting, and I shall be glad if others will send in their names to me as being both willing and desirous to act also upon it.

The honour of the Nursing profession and the safety of the public are in imminent danger, and the correspondence I have already received shows me that this movement for the protection of both, will receive the whole-hearted support, not only of the leaders, but also of the rank and file of the Nursing profession.

I am, dear Madam,

Yours faithfully,

SOPHIA G. WINGFIELD, M.R.B.N.A.,
Member of the General Council.

6, The Orchard,
Bedford Park, London, W.
Dec. 8th, 1896.

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The Age Question.

At the recent meeting of the Union of Women Workers at Manchester, some startling revelations were made on the age question of women workers. There was a general consensus of opinion among the women, and these were representative of most industries, that in the professions the age of decadence for woman is reached so early as thirty-five. This tragic conclusion was accepted calmly and without protest. But it is not to be expected that the workers themselves will receive their death sentence so lightly. In dealing with the subject here, it is not necessary to enter into the question of what causes have led to such a degeneration of woman's faculty that she should fail at that period, when a man is just entering into the full strength of his powers. Very few men accomplish work of much value until they have passed thirty-five. If we are to believe what we are told on this subject, there is no further use in the world for a working-woman of that age. Now, for the purpose of this article, the subject shall be considered from the Nurse's point of view.

Recently, a highly-qualified woman applied for the Sistership of a London Hospital. "I should not *think* for one moment of appointing a Sister over thirty years of age," said the Matron; "My Nurses and Probationers are all young, and I must have young Sisters."

So here the closure is applied at thirty, the age at which a woman should be just beginning to profit by the experiences of her life.

It is true that on all sides such views as this Matron expressed are held. In most of the advertisements for Nurses, Sisters, and even Matrons, it is common to see a significant "under thirty-five." Now, from an economic point of view the position is untenable.

Training Schools rarely admit a woman until she is twenty-three. Many of them insist that a Probationer shall be twenty-four or twenty-five before she begins her Nursing career. And the term of training tends towards lengthening as our standard becomes higher. So that—taking an extreme case where the Probationer enters Hospital at twenty-five, and takes a four years' training—it works out thus: The Nurse will be twenty-nine years of age before she is self-supporting, because, so long as she is training her salary cannot be described as a self-supporting one—and, if she is not to gain appointments after she is thirty-five, we find her working life is limited to six years.

Which is the *reductio ad absurdum*! It is not to be supposed that a woman will undergo the hardship and severity of a Hospital training in order that she may have a self-supporting

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