

"THE NURSING MANIA AND ITS FINANCIAL EFFECT  
ON THE PROFESSION.

SIR,—Lady Priestley's powerful article in the January number of the *Nineteenth Century* on "The Nurse à la mode," has induced me to trouble you with some remarks about another feature of what Lady Priestley calls the "new profession." I will not tread upon the ground so ably occupied by Lady Priestley, in whose views I fully concur, but I desire to direct attention to the financial effect on the medical profession of the enormous development of the nursing system.

I distinctly deprecate any desire to depreciate the value of skilled nursing, but it is now carried to such a ridiculous extent that the abuse of this medical aid is likely to become extremely detrimental to the profession at large. In the county in which I reside, if a patient, say a farmer's wife, has any illness, except of the most trivial nature, a skilled nurse is at once summoned, and not infrequently two nurses, one for the day and one for the night.

Now, what is the result of all this? If the illness lasts two months there is £16 16s. for the two nurses, besides their board and other extras, and the surgeon in attendance has to wait for his £5, and in many cases does not get paid at all, and in these days of agricultural depression the heavy expense entailed by nursing prevents the head of the family from paying the doctor. This is no imaginary evil that I am describing, and it is time that the attention of the profession should be called to the fact that this "new profession" is taking a very large sum which would otherwise go to the doctors, and in my county is represented by many thousand pounds. In fact, the undue development of the nursing system is having a bad effect upon the finances of the medical profession. Moreover, we shall soon have these ladies demanding to be considered as registered practitioners, as the midwives are already doing.

I am, &c., F.R.C.P.

We are glad that this question has been raised by a Fellow of the College of Physicians, because it would have been a delicate one to originate in a nursing paper, but we fear that much of the adverse criticism of the trained nurse is founded on a financial basis. The more efficient she becomes, and therefore the more *useful* to the public, the more her services will be in request, and there is no denying the fact that there are medical men, as the above letter proves, even in the higher ranks of the calling, who have been so unsuccessful themselves that they grudge the nurse a fair payment for her work, on the supremely selfish ground that such payments will diminish those made to doctors. But this is an economic question for the public themselves to settle. Are they when really ill and suffering better attended to, with the combined efforts of doctor and nurse, each performing the duties for which they are educated, or are they more comfortable and more sure of recovery when medical treatment and advice is left to some well-meaning but unskilled member of the family to carry out?

The question of who gets the "fees" is one which it is well to realise is certainly quite immaterial to the sick person. All that he demands, and *will have* when ill, is the best chance of recovery from disease; and we opine that it will create a well-merited feeling of distrust in the public mind if it is suggested to curtail the natural evolution of trained nursing, which is appreciated more and more by all classes of the community, because its progress may involve some infinitesimal decrease of medical fees.

THE REGISTRATION OF ASYLUM ATTENDANTS  
AS NURSES.

THE QUESTION OF FINANCE.

In an able Editorial in last week's *Medical Times*, criticising the suggestion to register Asylum Attendants without training in a General Hospital as members of the Royal British Nurses' Association, the financial side of the question is dealt with for the first time. We read:

"Many persons are asking why the Nurses' Association should be saddled with the expense and trouble of looking after asylum attendants, and we are informed on good authority that the real reason of the proposal is somewhat amusing. It appears that certain gentlemen desirous of effecting improvements in the status and education of asylum workers have found that it would be a very expensive matter to carry on and to publish a separate Register of these men and women. In the true spirit of modern philanthropy they therefore desire that somebody else should undertake the considerable cost of the system they desire to establish; and, from a worldly point of view, they are undoubtedly wise in their generation. It is notorious that the affairs of the Nurses' Association are managed with a carelessness or ignorance of financial details which is altogether unique and most remarkable. It is reported, for example, that during its last financial year its officials managed to spend some £800 in excess of its reliable income. It is, therefore, hardly to be wondered at that shrewd men, accustomed to deal with the feeble-minded, persuaded such persons to undertake a scheme which they were far too intelligent to deal with, because it is obvious that it could not be made remunerative to themselves. It has naturally caused no small amusement that it never seems to have occurred to the officials of the Nurses' Association that if the scheme were profitable those directly interested in it would not have given it away; on the contrary, the former actually seem to have imagined that the scheme, if adopted by themselves, would be profitable from a pecuniary point of view. The officials appear, however, to have fallen between two stools; on the one hand, the Nurses bitterly object to have all they have worked for given away; and, on the other hand, the advocates of the Asylum Attendants are most anxious to have their little scheme of philanthropy carried out at the expense of the Nurses."

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