

statement:—"We find a curious variation in the nurse's education from that of the medical student, which is of considerable importance when we are to consider her relation to the profession of medicine. This is the existence of the matron of the training school or hospital. A medical student is a fairly free agent. If he attend the necessary classes, walk the hospitals so as to put in an attendance, and afterwards pass the examination, he is all the time free as air to work or waste as he chooses. For the nurse probationer it is different; over her intervenes the awful figure of the matron, who is the most absolute despot, by right of her position, in this world as it at present exists. Immediate dismissal without appeal is generally the weapon put in every matron's hands by the hospital authorities. Fortunately most matrons are reasonable. It may be that such authority is needed, but it may be abused, and we believe that much of the friction which is occasionally found in the relation of the trained nurse to the medical profession has its root in this remarkable relation, which is maintained during hospital life, and afterwards to a less extent in private nursing institutions." It is said that it is wholesome discipline to see ourselves as others see us, and if the opinion of hospital matrons thus plainly expressed by Dr. James Bell is shared by his fellow Vice-Presidents on our Association, it is not surprising to find the medical men proposing to deprive our leaders of their *ex officio* seats on the Executive Committee—in fact to clip their wings. I wonder if Dr. Joseph Bell can realize what an infinity of harm such an unjust statement concerning the matrons of our hospitals is likely to do. I feel sure he cannot, or he would never have written it; and I am also sure that the loyalty of the majority of nurses to their matrons is whole-hearted and genuine, and they would far rather be members of a nursing staff where the matron possesses her proper authority, can enforce good discipline, and through organization make the work of all comparatively easy, than work under a weak and incapable nonentity. I know no matron who has absolute power of discharge without right of appeal to the Committee, but perhaps they manage these things differently in Scotland. I also think that medical men must be very careful how far they go in this mistaken campaign against our matrons; they cannot maintain discipline over women themselves, and already a far from happy spirit has crept into the minds of some nurses towards medical men, owing to the disrespect which has been offered to our Matrons by those members of the medical profession who are straining every nerve to control the Royal British Nurses' Association, and grasp the authority which belongs to the heads of our training schools. Medical men must not make themselves ridiculous in the eyes of nurses if they wish to retain their respect, and maintain their rightful authority in the sick room. They can find no surer way of alienating the sympathy of good nurses than by slighting the women at the head of their profession.

A LOVER OF DISCIPLINE.

#### THE GREAT BETRAYAL.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM,—I entirely agree with your correspondent in last week's issue as to the degradation to which the Nursing Profession is now subjected by

reason of the present policy of the officials of the Royal British Nurses' Association. I do not, however, feel sure that the opinion of the writer of the letter, that nurses have believed the *vox populi* to be the *vox Dei*, will hold water. It seems to me that many of us have not considered the *vox Dei* at all. If we did, it would surely lead us to fight for "liberty of conscience, liberty of speech, right, truth, and justice," besides inspiring us with some sense of honour, and of our obligations to yourself as founder of the Royal British Nurses' Association. I take this opportunity of saying that some, at least, of the Members of the Association burn with shame and indignation at the insults to which you have been exposed, in working for the best interests of those who have so ill repaid your efforts on their behalf. I am afraid that what the greater number of us have considered are our own personal interests and reputation at the present moment, and that we have shirked an honest endeavour to find out what is our *duty*, because we have not wished to face the odium which the result of such an inquiry, if we honestly acted up to it, would bring down upon ourselves. I, at least, am grateful for the fact that we have an object lesson before us, in the course which you have consistently pursued, of battling for the true interests of nurses, utterly regardless of personal consequences. I can only hope that the high ideal of devotion to duty which you have set before us may prove an inspiration to many.

I am, dear Madam,

Yours faithfully,

M. R. B. N. A.

#### SMOKING.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM,—Your correspondent "Miles" defends a nurse's smoking on the ground that she should be allowed equal privileges with the "cads who join the medical ranks." Surely this suggestion from a supporter is enough to make a nurse hesitate before she takes to smoking?

Yours faithfully,

AN OUTSIDER.

[We think our esteemed correspondent has misunderstood the point of "Miles's" letter, which appeared last week. We understood that "Miles" resented a nurse being called upon to resign a professional position because "she smoked a mild cigarette in her own private room"; thus making the habit of smoking indulged in at sundry times and places by men, a punishable crime for *women*. We gathered that "Miles" resented a medical man addressing a Sister "*in the ward*" with a pipe in his mouth, and a medical student smoking "whilst examining a child in its mother's arms," because the acts were *discourteous to women and disrespectful to the sick and perhaps dying patients*; and such men were classed by "Miles" as "cads," and, we think, very justly. The booing, bullying persons who usually assemble at the Meetings of the Royal British Nurses' Association, and who have made it impossible for gentlewomen to attend these meetings for some time past, require the wholesome discipline of "a mess-room court-martial"; and others have also often asked the question asked by "Miles": "Have the *gentlemen* of the medical profession no means of teaching manners to the cads who join their ranks?"—ED.]

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