

WORKHOUSE NURSING.

To the Editor of the "Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM,—I have been reading with much interest all you say and think, and all the articles in the NURSING RECORD on Workhouse Nursing. You all doubtless know far more on the subject than I do. Two months of workhouse nursing is at present all I can boast of, but there is one point in which I differ from you all. You all wish to reform workhouse infirmaries, in order to attract a better class of nurse. What seems to me so clear is—let a better class of nurse enter Workhouse Infirmaries and they will reform them. It would simply be a case of "cause and effect." What condition were *hospitals* in before the lady nurse entered their gates? Cannot all the leading London Matrons tell us of the terrible condition of things in their days of probation? It has never been my opinion that ladies make better nurses than others, but the qualities they possess, and their connection with a different stratum of life and society has brought about reforms and revealed facts to the better class public.

I know from myself, even in the short time I have been nursing in a workhouse, how perfectly astonished my friends and acquaintances are at the real condition of things. If only it became "the thing" to take up workhouse nursing, and ladies in large numbers took it up, I am perfectly convinced that in a very few years the position of the workhouse nurse would be a very different one.

Women are willing to go out and nurse the plague, to endure the risks and hardships of war, and to put up with the monotony of army nursing—Why? Because there is glory and notoriety in it, because it is only through interest and a certain social position that these posts can be obtained, but when it comes to putting one's pride in one's pocket, and nursing God's unfortunate ill-fated creatures—for in what way are infirm patients more unworthy of good nursing than hospital ones? *then* it is a different matter.

No, no, there is nothing for it but a "movement"—a *fashionable movement*, for ladies to take up workhouse nursing—the reform would follow.

Yours faithfully,

ONE WHO THINKS, AND WHO LOVES HER PROFESSION.

[No one in these days will contest the argument that educated women have effected many necessary reforms in hospitals and infirmaries, but those reforms have had to be sanctioned by the authorities responsible for the institutions; in the majority of the hospitals men of culture and knowledge of the world, who largely compose their committees, have wisely supported Matrons and Nurses in their work, and by their sanction and support much reform has been effected. In Poor Law Infirmaries, where the Medical Superintendent is a man of liberal views, and in conjunction with a trained Matron, excellent systems of nursing have been inaugurated—again, the sanction and support of the Boards of Guardians has been necessary. But it is useless to place educated Nurses in workhouse infirmaries—under the control of uncultured Masters and Matrons (excellent persons no doubt in other positions of life), and expect good and progressive results—it is asking nurses to do impossibilities to make them responsible for nursing the sick to untrained and ignorant men and women,

who with the best intentions in the world have not the necessary knowledge to superintend skilled professional work. It will require more than fashion to reform the nursing in workhouses. Trained nurses are acting conscientiously in refusing to attempt to nurse the sick under existing circumstances, and their refusal is the only means by which an efficient system of nursing will ultimately be arranged under the authority of the Local Government Board.—Ed.]

WOMANHOOD HONOURED.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM,—I was rejoiced to see in last week's NURSING RECORD that Miss Barton's splendid work in connection with the American Red Cross Society has received public recognition from the United States Senate. This is as it should be, for Miss Barton's great services have been recognised all over the civilized world, and her name will go down to posterity as a benefactor of her kind. Does not her work also show, by the way, the capacity of women to succeed when they have a free hand. The reason why women's work frequently is somewhat of a failure is that they are so handicapped by circumstances. Few women for instance have more, or as much, money as will suffice to keep them in ordinary comfort, and if they have, it is only of comparatively recent years that it has not become the property of their husbands upon their marriage. The wealth of the country is therefore mainly in the hands of men. Then again, when a man is placed in a position of responsibility, as a matter of course he is empowered with the authority which enables him efficiently to discharge the responsibilities of that position, but with a woman how often it happens that she has to fight a hard battle before she obtains the position absolutely necessary if discipline is to be maintained. Furthermore, when a woman marries it seems to be generally considered that henceforward domestic drudgery is the one and only vocation for her. Why? A man when he marries does not give up all work, and why should a woman? except that it is a matter of convenience to her husband if she devotes herself to the making of puddings and pies, and the minute supervision of domestic details. He obtains in this way the unpaid services of an excellent domestic. But this can scarcely be considered an ideal career for a well educated woman, who, if she has a methodical mind can certainly do all that is necessary in the way of superintending the work of her domestic staff in one hour in the morning. Why should not a woman be free to follow her own profession—as is indeed conceded in the case of medical women—after matrimony as before? Is not the reason that the minds of most men are tinged with the oriental belief that their wives are their chattels, and their exclusive property, body and soul—that is if they think that women have any souls! Well—women have the matter in their own hands. Matrimony is not the only vocation, as more and more women are beginning to find out. These are heretical statements no doubt, and I should bring down upon myself the vials of male wrath, and, indeed, that of many women also if I ventured to sign my name. I therefore enclose my card and remain

Yours faithfully,

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