

Nursing Echoes.

* * *All communications must be duly authenticated with name and address, not for publication, but as evidence of good faith, and should be addressed to the Editor, 20, Upper Wimpole Street, W.*



We are glad to note that a letter which appeared in the *British Medical Journal* of March 1st, on the question of State Registration of trained nurses, by Mr. Sydney Holland, Chairman of the London Hospital, has been ably answered in the last issue by Miss C. J. Wood, who points out that other interests are involved in the question besides those of the general hospitals, and also that the arguments used by Mr. Holland against the registration of nurses "are such as were urged in the early part of the last century against the registration of the medical profession, and then as now they confused the issues." Further that "the general public has neither the knowledge nor the skill, and very likely not the time, to investigate, first, the credentials of the institution, and then the character of the nurse." Miss Wood claims, and most trained nurses will agree with her that "by the machinery of the register it will be possible to evolve order out of the existing chaos of training, and that its indirect action will be to form a professional and ethical standard which will, in the course of time, steady and elevate the profession."

An interesting meeting convened by the Workhouse Nursing Association was held on Monday last at the Examination Hall on the Victoria Embankment, when a paper was read by Miss Gibson, Matron of the Birmingham Infirmary, on "The Scarcity of Nurses in Workhouse Infirmarys, its Cause and Cure." Miss Gibson advocated that probationers should work under a central board, and that their term of agreement should extend over four or five years. Two years of this time, she proposed, should be spent in small country unions, under superintendence, and that their work should be inspected by a Woman Inspector appointed for the purpose. She thought that though three years' training was sufficient in a general hospital where all the cases were acute, the longer period was necessary under the poor law to equalise matters, as many of the patients were merely infirm, more especially when it was remembered that she proposed that two years should be spent in country workhouses. If these

nurses were given the status conferred by a Government Department, and if the proposed organisation of the new Army Nursing Service were followed, she thought the supply of candidates for poor law vacancies would be adequate.

The discussion was briefly opened by Miss C. J. Wood, who said it was the first time she had heard any poor law Matron publicly advocate the obligation of the Matrons of the large infirmaries to look outside their own four walls and realise their responsibilities to the small infirmaries. She thought there was hope for the future if the scheme indicated by Miss Gibson could be worked out, and nurses attached to a central authority were removable by it.

Dr. Rhodes, Chairman of the Northern Workhouse Association, advocated fair conditions of work, leave, and pay for workhouse nurses. His association had no dearth of candidates for training, their difficulty was the expense.

Miss Haldane described the working of the Poor Law System in Scotland, where the Superintendent Nurse is completely independent of the Matron in her own department. The system worked well and there was no friction.

Several poor law Guardians spoke, but none of them seemed to grasp the fundamental difficulty of the poor law nursing question, namely, the placing of a nurse's professional work under the supervision and control of unprofessional persons, and the discussion rather lacked point.

The last speaker was Miss Wilson, of the Workhouse Nursing Association, who said that she had it on the best authority that since the Irish Local Government Board had issued their new Nursing Order, which was in many respects in advance of the English one, workhouse nursing had made enormous strides.

Mr. Chamberlain, in a warm defence of the Concentration Camps, in the House of Commons, said that every official from Lord Milner down to every nurse were doing their utmost to combat the terrible mortality which all deplored, and which was being reduced with extraordinary rapidity. It was admitted that the sick had been much better nursed than they could have been in their own homes. While every defect had been seized upon by hon. members as a means of attacking the Government, there had been no recognition of the ceaseless labour, sacrifice, and devotion everybody concerned in these camps had shown.

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