

"A New Order of Nurses" (!)

A strong argument in favour of creating by law a Central Nursing Board having powers of registration and discipline has been recently forced upon us by the founder of what she is pleased to term a new order of *nurses* (!).

Superintendents of Nursing Homes and Associations throughout the country have been bombarded with leaflets intended to advertise a scheme whereby unskilled women are brought into competition with properly-trained nurses, and an attempt is made to gull the public by specious arguments into preferring the sham to the genuine article.

The circular is drawn up by some person utterly ignorant of what the term "trained nurse" should imply, or what is meant, generally speaking, by the words *association, infirmary, or private nurses*.

The utter absurdity of the scheme is patent when we consider that the idea is to oust properly-trained nurses, obtained in the usual way through reputable associations, privately or by the recommendation of medical men, and instead to substitute *at a much cheaper rate* women who apparently have no professional qualifications, although presumably capable of doing the cooking and other household work, with the assistance of a charwoman, in an ordinary middle-class house.

The circular premises that there are at present three kinds of nurses available for private patients, but that none of them are suitable for a vast number of cases.

The three kinds are said to consist of :—

1. The institution nurse, who is unsuitable for many on account of her high charges, and particularly because she "is supplied on the understanding that she receives domestic attendance and does nothing but nurse the patient."

2. The "infirmary visiting nurse" (surely a figment of the advertiser's brain, for infirmaries do not send their nurses to private cases), who is not refined enough for the patient's feelings!

3. The "private nurse," who (no matter how highly trained she may be, nor what certificates she may hold) is unsuitable because "there is a growing prejudice in favour of more science than these nurses ordinarily possess"—and yet please take notice that in our circular there is no mention of any evidence of hospital or other training for those of the new order. Apparently they need none, but are born already equipped for the fray as "practical scientific nurses" and cook-generals, ready to take their place and work havoc and dismay in the "scores of thousands of households" waiting to be victimised in suburban London. Whilst we realise that there is plenty of scope for sensible but untrained women to make themselves useful in houses where there may be long-continued chronic illness or only minor ailments to be dealt with, we feel that the attempted introduction of "the new

order" is fraught with danger to the public, a danger from which registration of efficiently trained nurses can alone protect them.

A NEW ORDER OF NURSES.

[THE CIRCULAR.]

These nurses are not hampered by strict Institution Rules, neither are they restricted by association rules in any way as to the charges they make.

The small subscription fee which they pay annually to cover postage and clerkage does not in any way interfere with the remuneration which they receive. One of our leading Physicians has written as under :—

"At present there are but three kinds of Nurses available in a case of sudden illness, viz. :—

"The Institution Nurse at £2 2s. and £3 3s. a week; the ordinary occasional private nurse, generally a comparative amateur; and the infirmary visiting nurse.

"But it is apparent that these three alternatives cover only half the ground. In suburban London alone there must be thousands—scores of thousands—of households where the needs are not answered by any one of the three, especially the households where one or no servants are kept—a kind of household getting very rapidly more numerous as servants get scarcer and the already appalling bill for rent and rates gets larger.

"In such families there are frequently both too little of poverty and too much of refinement either to justify or to make possible the Infirmary Nurse. The Institution Nurse would not go (even were the expense smaller), because the Institution Nurse is supplied on the understanding that she receives domestic attendance and does nothing but nurse the patient. The attendance would not be forthcoming, therefore she would not go.

"There remains only the Private Nurse. Some of these are most excellent people, but, when driven into a corner in an emergency, the medical man and no less than the family may discover that they do not know of a private nurse who is disengaged. Moreover, there is a growing prejudice in favour of more science than these nurses ordinarily possess!

"What is necessary and urgent is an institution where at any time a nurse could be got for a guinea a week who would undertake not only the bare attendance on the patient, but such additional work as the preparation of her own and the patient's food, leaving any rough work to the servant or charwoman. Surely there must be plenty of women skilled in nursing who would not despise an opportunity of this kind!

"It would be infinitely better, too, for a medical man to find a practical scientific nurse at a bedside, to whom he could give his directions rather than some unskilled amateur.

"As to the need, it is simply a crying one. It must be borne in mind that the neighbourliness which is assumed in cases of illness, and which does undoubtedly tend to solve such questions in the country, is not to be relied upon in London; every day one meets somebody who tells you that he and his wife have lived in the same suburb for so many years, and 'do not know their next-door neighbour,' or half-a-dozen people in the close vicinity."

Undoubtedly the nursing of the poorer middle classes is a problem which needs dealing with, but we do not anticipate that the "New Order" will solve it.

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