

### A Letter from Olympus.

Have you read the Parliamentary Debate on the Official Directory of Nurses Bill? Nurses should make a point of doing so, and especially is this necessary for the nurses trained in schools like the London Hospital, where the autocratic authorities have by every means in their power opposed just legislation and any degree of intelligent self-government for trained nurses as a class. We have before us "No. 15 Matron's Annual Letter," issued from the London Hospital, Whitechapel Road, E., which is sent to all the nurses trained in that school. It is interesting to read what Miss Luckes has to say on the question of State Registration, and the quality of argument of which she considers her pupils worthy: "Nothing of special importance concerning the State Registration of Nurses took place during 1907 (here truth should have compelled the report of the Nursing Organisation Session at the Paris Nursing Conference, June, 1907, at which the representatives of a dozen countries and colonies presented unanimous reports *in favour* and in support of State Registration of Nurses), but we are now anticipating that a Bill to provide for the establishment of an Official Directory of Nurses (of which I told you in my last Annual Letter) will be shortly introduced to the House of Lords by Lord Balfour of Burleigh."

"The suggestion which emanates from the Hospital Central Council, and over which Mr. Holland has taken infinite trouble, would be an entirely different thing from the State Registration of Nurses."

Indeed it would. The Directory Bill advocated by Miss Luckes and Mr. Holland would have placed trained nurses in the position of indentured serfs, without a vestige of personal responsibility for their own work, or power of defence; in a word, the London Hospital Nursing System would have been thrust without consulting it upon the whole nursing profession, while the State Registration Bill provides that Trained Nurses shall be given reasonable powers of self-government, the basis of just social conditions, for any class of human beings.

Miss Luckes recommends the happily defunct Directory Bill to her readers. "The Nurses who might wish their names to appear would not be required to pass an examination; their efficiency would not be guaranteed in any way. . . Very different from the fallacious guarantee which would be in existence if Nurses were State Registered Nurses!"

It is almost incredible that such unreasonable twaddle can be written in these days, or, indeed, that it can be read with patience by educated women.

We read further that "If this Official Directory

were established, it should satisfy those members of the public or of the Medical Profession, who wish to be able to find out by referring to a book the nature of the experience which any Nurse has had." (We wonder if retention in "durancé vile" in which a good many women with "experience" indulge between periods of exploiting the defenceless sick as nurses would have been clearly recorded in the Directory?) "It would preserve the freedom of the Training Schools to adopt whatever system of training proves best adapted to the needs of the Nurses, and of the Hospital concerned, leaving the authorities of the respective Hospitals free to develop and improve their conditions as may seem to them desirable when opportunities offer."

The demand of hospital governors in the Directory Bill was for "freedom" for the training schools to do absolutely as they have done in the past with their nursing material (a poor thing, but mine own) giving no guarantee to the pupil, and in consequence to the public, of efficient training—or indeed of any personal rights whatever. This "freedom" at the London Hospital has for a quarter of a century deprived its pupils of the right to sufficient training and practical experience in the wards, and compelled them to contract to work as private nurses at a very small salary for the time which should have been spent there. Nurses are now also asking for a little "freedom," and that is what the London Hospital System denies.

Miss Luckes congratulates herself "that the steady development of trained nursing would have been hindered if Miss Nightingale and others had not spoken out with no uncertain tone 20 years ago, when State Registration of Nurses was urged upon us with the same violence which characterises its advocates at the present time." Then follows a lengthy statement unjustly placing upon Miss Nightingale the active opposition, and in consequence the discredit, of obstructing just conditions of education and work for trained nurses in the United Kingdom, privileges enjoyed by their colleagues in many parts of the world. The attempt to make this revered lady, in the 89th year of her age, responsible for the intolerance to progress which emanates from the London Hospital, is as unfair as it is untrue. In the eternal fight between autocratic bureaucracy and the defenceless woman worker, the name of Florence Nightingale should never have been mentioned, and the attempt of Miss Luckes to bolster up her crumbling case against the organisation of Trained Nursing by the State by such means will be universally condemned throughout the nursing world.

But presumably Miss Luckes indites her mandates from Olympus, and "No. 15" is throughout extraordinarily droll. The all-embracing condemnation includes not only the Queen of Nurses, but the Chairman and the Chaplain. Mr. Holland, poor martyr, must be defended from the

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