

THE
BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,063.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 15, 1908.

Vol. XLI.

Editorial.

WANTED, A CODE OF ETHICS.

Writing on the subject of State Registration of Nurses—an American doctor sets forth the various needs of the nursing profession which a good system of registration might satisfy. He places first a Code of Ethics, and we find it written in that admirable work on Practical Nursing, by Miss Maxwell and Miss Pope of New York, "If nurses would follow more closely the principles of the Florence Nightingale Pledge, which is recommended to their attention, they would be less likely to commit many of the indiscretions for which they are often justly blamed."

This pledge is as follows:—"I solemnly pledge myself before God and in the presence of this assembly to pass my life in purity and to practise my profession faithfully. I will abstain from whatever is deleterious and mischievous, and will not take or knowingly administer any harmful drug. I will do all in my power to maintain and elevate the standard of my profession, and will hold in confidence all personal matters committed to my keeping, and all family affairs coming to my knowledge in the practice of my calling. With loyalty will I endeavour to aid the physician in his work, and devote myself to the welfare of those committed to my care."

It would indeed be well for all concerned if the nursing profession had an ethical code to which all would subscribe. But without unity, without professional standards, without any degree of self-government, we realise how impossible it is to either encourage or enforce any general

standard of moral qualifications amongst nurses. Chief amongst these moral qualifications we should place dignity. If a woman has a just appreciation of her own dignity few and far between are the lapses of conduct calculated to bring discredit on her class of which she will be guilty, the woman devoid of self-respect and consequently of dignity, must have a deteriorating effect upon the colleagues associated with her—and thus more and more the need for a code of nursing ethics is becoming apparent to those who hold their work in honour. Three times during the past week, our ethical sense, not to say our sense of decency has been violated.

In the public street we met a woman in nurses' uniform walking in the embrace of her lover—who was kissing her after the proverbial manner of "Betty and John." In a public 'bus two women in nurses' uniform were exchanging what appeared to be professional pleasantries, the one having secured from "a pet boy" a bit of the human anatomy which she was carrying about in her apron pocket, and concerning which she was making ribald jokes thoroughly appreciated by her companion; and upon a third occasion a woman wearing uniform stepped jauntily out of a bar parlour of a low-looking "pub," evidently the worse for drink! Such sights make one blush for one's calling and one's sex, and long for the time when there will be set up by high-minded persons an efficient bar at the entrance of the Nursing Profession which will exclude women devoid of "vertuous and gentle discipline," and which will compel the Nursing Schools to inculcate in their pupils the whole duty of citizenship.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)