

Notes on the Congress.

BY ONE WHO WAS NOT THERE.

In the daily papers I read of the Congress, for, alas! fate decreed that I should not attend it in person.

One thing struck me as being distinctly funny. The Hon. Sydney Holland said that Registration would do harm, because if a nurse were registered the public would take her as being a fit and proper person, and would make no further inquiries.

Now, I ask you, nurses engaged in private work, did you ever hear of a patient inquiring into your character or credentials? I never did. One more often than not goes to a case at a moment's notice, and very often in the middle of the night. Are the friends of the victim going to keep your cab waiting while they ask where you were trained and if you have brought your certificate? And even if they did such an unheard-of thing, would they be any the wiser? Suppose you are sent to a man with a fractured base; the anxious wife says, "you are trained, of course?" "Certainly," you answer. "At which hospital?" she asks. "At the City of London, corner of Old Street and City Road." She would be quite satisfied; the name sounds imposing; she and all her friends would have implicit faith in you, and not one of the lot would know that the only training you could get in that hospital would be in maternity work.

Neither are doctors always to be relied upon for information; they have no time and less inclination to make inquiries about all the nurses they employ. A friend of mine has had a nurse working for him for years. He said one day to me: "I wish they would teach you nurses how to feed patients." "They do teach us," I said. "They did not teach Nurse Barnes," he replied. "She could not even give a nutrient enema until I taught her, and when I asked her to feed a patient through a nasal tube she nearly had a fit. I always have to do it myself."

I asked where she was trained.

"Oh, I don't know. Somewhere in the country, I think."

"Was she ever trained, do you think?"

"I really don't know; perhaps she never was."

I have had a few inquiries made about me. Here are some taken at random.

On the telephone. "Nurse, can you take a case for me at once?"

"Yes; what is it?"

"Cancer. Have you grey eyes?"

"Have I what?"

"Grey eyes."

"No; greenish. Why?"

"Oh, that will be all right. Patient won't have a grey-eyed person near her."

No question as to character or training there. Here is another.

"Nurse, I have given your name to a lady who will be requiring a nurse in November. By the way, you do maternity work?"

"Yes, and I am free for November."

"That is good. You will hear from her in a day or two."

The lady wrote and asked me to call, and when I called she asked my fees, and if my hair was naturally curly or if I wore curling pins. On being assured that my hair was naturally crinkled she engaged me, without asking a question about my training, or if I drank, or if I were fond of babies. I mentioned this to her when I got to know her well, and she said:—

"There is a good old saying, 'ask no questions and you will hear no lies.' Suppose I had asked where you were trained and when. I don't know one hospital from another, and if you had told me you had been trained at the finest hospital in the world, and it was situated in Pitlochry or Moscow, how much wiser should I have been? And if you had had no training at all, is it likely that you would have told me?"

The Hon. Sydney Holland would say that she could have written to that hospital. Well, we cannot all be trained at the London, where doubtless a record of each nurse is kept and someone employed to answer questions about them. Records may be kept in some hospitals, but I know they are not forthcoming four or five years after the nurse has left, and in very few hospitals would it be possible to keep a person on purpose to answer inquiries about all the nurses who have left, even during the last ten years.

Once I was sent to a case because the people wished for a scientific nurse, though they did not stipulate which particular science I was to be learned in, and they never said a word about my training or character. Another time, many years ago, I was sent to a case because an elderly nurse was wanted, and it did not appear that any other qualification was needed!

Not only is it bad for the patient to have untrained, or partly trained nurses; it is quite as bad for nurses themselves. A lady told me once that she would not have a nurse for her paralysed father, because nurses say that all helpless patients must have bedsores, and she found that she could keep him without having one. Upon inquiring further into the matter I was told that they had had a

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