

characteristic of her. The cost of the book—little enough when one thinks of its intrinsic value—will prevent many nurses from buying it outright. To them I would say, "Get a money-box *at once*, and drop into it every coin you can spare, and on the day that you are able to purchase it you will be able to count yourselves happy women!" I hope the day is not far distant when English-speaking nurses at least will feel ashamed to say they have not heard of "A History of Nursing." It ought—and I have no doubt it soon will—have a place of honour in every institution where nurses are gathered together. The chapter on "Great Britain and Ireland," being an epitome of our own Nursing history and professional evolution, I have read with avidity.

The birthright of freedom of conscience, and the legal right of freedom of speech, were not recognised as *female* rights sixteen years ago, or, at the most, they were very grudgingly allowed under compulsion. Hence the battles lost and won as described in Volume III. In reviewing the past, and contrasting it with the present, it is gratifying to reflect that some progress has been made in this respect. An act in the drama of my own professional career will serve to demonstrate the tyranny from which the individual nurse was liable to suffer in those days, and her inability to obtain redress.

I was employed as District Nurse in Dublin (Q.V.J.I.) at the District Nurses' Home, in Stephen's Green. On one occasion Archbishop Plunket—at that time Chairman of our Committee—had for his guest the late Archbishop Benson of Canterbury. After a special service held in St. Patrick's Cathedral on Sunday, which we all attended, it had been arranged that the two Archbishops should come to tea in our large and pretty drawing-room, with other guests of their company. This they did, and in such distinguished company we nurses took tea in happy fraternal fellowship. The occasion was a memorable one. The Superintendent was present and enjoyed the afternoon as much as we did. No one could have foreseen, least of all the victim, any unpleasant sequel! That same evening I started for my holiday to Howth, a pretty suburb. I wrote an account of the occasion and sent it to the *Hospital*. (N.B.—I regret to say that I did not know of our *JOURNAL* in those days). Owing to the sudden death of Archbishop Benson, who had left Dublin to be the guest of Mr. Gladstone, my article was modified and produced in abridged form. Thereupon I received a wrathful letter from the Superintendent for my presumptuous conduct, and upon my return I was told solemnly by the maid who opened the door to me, that my presence was required immediately in the Superintendent's office. As I came before the tribunal of injustice, I clearly saw that my case was a bad one. I had dared to write to the press without consulting her! (I was unaware of any Draconic law forbidding such harmless action.) My offence was unforgiveable. It was a case of summary jurisdiction of the *Supreme Court*—*I must go!* Among

the rules concerning the conduct of nurses, there was one to the effect that only those who had committed grave offences could be dismissed. So this was a grave offence! I was moreover told by this lady that I must write to the Secretary and tell him I was *resigning!* This I refused to do, and replied that I should tell him the truth. This I did by letter, expecting it to be produced at the next Committee meeting. I received no reply, and I was allowed to go. Possibly the letter was suppressed. Further comment is useless. I suppose it would have been the same if I had been only half through my district training. I may remark that I had had between three and four years' training, the Superintendent had received but one at Addenbrooke's, Cambridge. The sympathy and kindness which I received from my fellow nurses was balm to my wounded spirit. Such tyranny would have been impossible if we had had State Registration. There would then have been a Supreme Court of *Appeal*.

BEATRICE KENT.

Colosseum Terrace, N.W.

MATRONS AND THE RANK AND FILE.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—It surprises me very much that you should publish such an intemperate article as that appearing over the name of "Albinia Brodrick" in last week's issue of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

Matrons can scarcely be expected to recommend such a journal to their own, or any other nurses. Certainly I for one shall cease to do so.

From this and other articles it is evident that Miss Brodrick has still to learn that the sum total of human imbecility or wickedness cannot logically be regarded as the average share of the individual, and until she does so I think that her ideas are not such as can with advantage be generally promulgated.

I am, yours faithfully,

LUCY RAMSDEN.

Rotunda Hospital, Dublin.

[The last of the articles on "Impressions of Nursing in the United States," contributed by the Hon. Albinia Brodrick to this journal, appeared on February 15th, and we are compelled to own that her comparison between the average American matron and many in this country is, unfortunately, true. In Ireland the matrons of the Dublin hospitals have taken their right position, and have always been in the forefront of all progressive nursing movements. It has not been so in England, where their attitude has in many instances been disastrously reactionary and injurious to the best interests of the nursing profession as a whole. It is useless to boycott a newspaper which reflects public opinion. It is one of a newspaper's most important duties that it should do so. Miss Kent's letter in this issue is curiously apposite to the matter under discussion. The attitude of mind and conduct of the Superintendent referred to is exactly that condemned by Miss Brodrick.—ED.]

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