

## NURSING ECONOMICS.

### AN OPEN LETTER TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE OF THE LONDON HOSPITAL.

GENTLEMEN,—As the proposer of the Resolution passed at the annual meeting of the Society for State Registration of Trained Nurses last July, then forwarded to you and presented for your consideration by your secretary in October, I may perhaps be permitted to discuss one point in the reply of your secretary, acting upon your behalf.

In this reply you are made to state that you do not know what I mean by expressing the opinion in the Resolution that it is "economically unsound" to send out private nurses for gain with only two years' training, in competition with those nurses holding certificates of three or more years' consecutive training in hospital wards. May I be permitted to enlighten you? Although, as men of business—financiers, bankers, brewers, newspaper proprietors, or large landowners, employing much male labour—this should not be necessary. But the fact remains, that when men arrogate to themselves the power, as Hospital Committees can do, to organize the labour of women, such as the great Private Nursing Business you carry on in connection with the Public Charity—the London Hospital—they usually exclude women and the workers from all participation in its management, with the sad result that the very arduous labour of the nurses is quite inadequately remunerated, and the profits, even under the cloak of charity, quite inordinately excessive.

It is therefore, in my opinion, "economically unsound" that the Committee of a Charitable Institution should carry on a brisk trade in nurses before their contract of training and service has expired, unless the terms of such training and service are the universally accepted standards of analogous institutions which train nurses. Otherwise the skilled worker is under-sold both in time and cash.

Associated with the great City of London as some of you are, you have but to study the history of the powerful City Guilds to realise how tenaciously they maintained the principle that the apprentice should not be permitted to shirk his term of instruction, and compete in the open market with the master craftsmen. These Guilds permitted no short cut to the labour market; they considered it "economically unsound." In the present day employers meet the same determination for just dealing, enforced by the Trade Unions; and these Unions have a term, lacking

in euphony (which I refrain from applying in this connection), for those who undersell skilled labour for the purpose of excessive profit. That is the underlying principle incorporated in my Resolution.

No doubt had it been considered by you in meeting assembled, before your omniscient secretary defined, without such formality, what your opinions ought to be, you, as business men, would have grasped its significance without this explanation.

I remain, Gentlemen,  
Your obedient servant,  
BEATRICE KENT,  
Member State Registration Society.

## THE NURSES' MISSIONARY LEAGUE.

### CHRISTIANITY AND WOMANHOOD.

Under the auspices of the Nurses' Missionary League, a course of four lectures has been arranged to take place on the Fridays in November.

The first of these was held, by the kind permission of the Misses Gregory, at 33, Bedford Square, Bloomsbury. Mrs. Higgs (National Association of Women's Lodging Houses) entitled her address "The Christian Ideal of Womanhood." The chair was taken by Miss Amy Hughes (Q.V.J.N.), who, in a few well-chosen words, introduced the lecturer, whose keynote was *consecration*, which, she said, was the source of the Christian ideal of womanhood.

The nurse's vocation is essentially consecrated to the *body*, which is the temple or shrine of the Holy Spirit. There are many hindrances to be encountered and overcome by those who are striving to attain to the fulness of the ideal. First among them, she said, was the danger of familiarity with sickness, which is apt to breed contempt and indifference. She laid special stress upon the danger to the nurse and her patients of overwork, which quenches the fervour of consecration and makes a machine of the woman.

"Nursing is becoming, if it has not already become," said Mrs. Higgs, "a sweated trade." The rights of the individual must be safeguarded; perfect freedom of mind cannot co-exist with an over-wrought, tired body. With such unnatural conditions there could be no consecration to enshrine her heart. She is deprived of light; she cannot be "the lady with the lamp."

A lady doctor had told the lecturer that in her opinion the whole life of the nurse required transformation. She pleaded for shorter hours, and more rest and outside interests.

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