

A CROWNLESS NURSING SISTER; OR, WORK WHILE YE HAVE THE LIGHT.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

Sir,—It is not only within the walls of our great Hospitals—naval, military, and general—that our brave Nursing heroines abide; for there are too many of our Private and District Nurses (particularly the latter) falling betimes at our very doors. To my own mind this is a passing strange paradox; but perhaps these silent and somewhat solitary workers are too tame, too close to the naked eye to be remembered, whilst the hum of labour-tide is at full, and busy, bustling, battling life resounds with din and noise and strife on every side. And it is simply monstrous and idle in the extreme to imagine the Matron's story, about those Hospitals keeping in touch with these workers after they have left them, to contain a grain of truth; neither is it desirable that such should be the case. An utterly free, independent, and unbiased public authority should do this; hence my warmest support and most hearty congratulations I would accord to the B.N.A.

During my recent wanderings I have lighted upon a picture both pathetic and touching—viz., a temporarily necessitous Nursing Sister. Her landlord, who is one of our Doctors, has kindly permitted her to tarry where she is for the present, as her health is somewhat below par *pro tem*. But as she is *entirely* without food or fuel, my very soul rises at the thought. And although this case is not by any means the first of its kind which has come under my notice in days gone by, now that we are become a more organised body of people, I will at least hope to be pardoned for placing it before your readers. I will hope also to be forgiven for *not* mentioning her name, as this I am not at liberty to disclose just now. One thing I may tell you, viz.: "She has scarcely a relative in the world, and hitherto she has stolen her hours of study for the most part from her sleep, and her library from her stomach and garments." So the question naturally arises, shall we stoop to lavish upon this lone worker, who is by this very silent suffering seeking to allure each one of us to a higher altitude, into a purer atmosphere, to scale the towering mountain range, and thereby take up quarters upon a more extensive table-land, a sister's or a brother's love for awhile? Or shall we see her sell her home, books, &c., and sink into the sea of oblivion for ever? Of this we may rest assured, if we would have our work to abide, we must have a real passion for the very work itself.

You will remember the story of the sculptor Briants. In the Ecole des Beaux Arts at Paris there is a bronze Mercury drawing a thorn out of his heel—the last work of Briants. "Although a man of genius, he was very poor, and a garret had to serve him for studio as well as home. During the severe winter he was working at his statue, and had to save his small allowance of fuel for the hours during which his model was sitting to him. One night the cold was so intense that he heaped upon his own bed all the clothing he possessed. Suddenly he remembered his masterpiece; and, dreading lest the damp clay should be frozen, he stripped himself and put all his clothing and bed covering around the figure. When his friend Cavalié entered next day the sculptor lay on his bed frozen to death." Was his not a passion for work? He was gone, but his work remained.

But what shall we say concerning the Nursing Profession closing its doors to Unitarians? True, to-day Unitarianism is martyrdom; to-morrow it will be victory. For indeed, Sir, I cannot conceive of any proper Religion which is not based on Reason. "Without enlightened Reason we could not have any veracious thought or action. There never can be theological unity of belief, or belief of real theological truth, till one criterion of truth is adopted by seekers after God." Fancy one hundred and eighty dissentient voices!

Permit me, in conclusion, to commend the great cause for which I plead to the thoughtful consideration of every in-

dividual member of the Nursing community—the Religious Emancipation of Professional Nurses, coupled with the welfare of the wrongfully oppressed, such as are daily to be found upon the toilsome wayside of life—in sure and certain hope that this pleading will not be in vain. There must be no looking back at the blissful "might have been." We must, to enjoy life, to be happy, look steadily at *what is*, and do our best with it.—Yours to serve,

SARAH CLAYTON, M.B.N.A., &c.

THE MIDWIVES' REGISTRATION BILL.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

Dear Sir,—The Manchester Medico-Ethical Association, comprising one hundred and fifty of the most influential and representative Medical Practitioners of Lancashire and Cheshire, having carefully considered the Midwives' Registration Bill (1890) in ordinary meeting and in Committee, request us to solicit your strenuous opposition to this Bill, which is down for second reading in the House of Commons on the 27th instant.

In support of our request we beg to suggest the following considerations, and the legal opinion annexed, most respectfully to your notice:—

- (a) Any such Bill would be most highly prejudicial to the public interest by enabling ignorant and unskilled women, who have either received no medical education or an education extending only over a few months, to undertake and perform serious and dangerous operations upon lying-in women, which are only performed by Registered Medical Practitioners after mature consideration and consultation.
- (b) The medical treatment of the diseases of women and children would, without doubt, amongst the poorer and working classes, pass into the hands of Midwives registered under this Bill, who would be permitted to practise the science of medicine as if they had received a complete medical education and training. (See legal opinion below, par. 10.) Thus two great classes of the community would not receive the skilled treatment of their diseases they are entitled to—only to be rendered by Registered Medical Practitioners—but would be under the care of ignorant untrained persons.
- (c) After mature consideration, and by the advice of the medical profession generally, Sir W. Foster, M.D., M.P., has withdrawn his name from "the back" of the Bill.

Dr. Farquharson, M.P., and Sir W. G. Hunter, M.D., M.P., in no way represent the spirit of the medical profession, and have little experience of family practice.

The General Medical Council has declined to support the Bill, and while it is proposed that the Council should "frame and approve the rules" for the education of Midwives, the Council is given no power to enforce the carrying out of these rules, although a Midwife registered under this Bill will be placed upon the same footing as a Registered Medical Practitioner.

The Royal College of Physicians of England has also repudiated the Bill as being injurious to public health.

- (d) It is generally considered that this Bill is to be used as a back-door entrance to the medical profession, and a plan to avoid the extended educational course necessary to qualify anyone to undertake the treatment of the diseases of women and children. While giving the promoters of this Bill every credit for good intentions, we respectfully beg to state that in the opinion of this Association they are supporting a scheme which, instead of being a public benefit, will have most disastrous effects upon the health and wel-

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