

NURSING ECHOES.

It is a great relief that the Press boycott has been raised to some extent on the nurses' registration question. It was the same with the suffrage—for years persistent silence, and then a "good press." Let us hope for the sake of the sick of all classes, that discussion on nurses' registration will be more and more extended, and the truth made known. We hear on all sides women are shying away from nursing, and the conventual regulations in hospital have, no doubt, much to do with the distaste of modern well-educated women for training schools. To be treated like a child or an imbecile no longer appeals to our girls.

The St. Marylebone Guardians had before them recently a report from the Medical Superintendent on the standard of the efficiency of the medical work in the Infirmary. The Infirmary, he said, contained a wide range of cases, and having the voluntary services of only one specialist, could not claim to provide modern medical treatment. The class of the population from which they had drawn nurses had, as a result of the war, and the health campaign in the public press, a much clearer conception of what constitutes up-to-date equipment and treatment of the sick. With greater opportunities for training at General Hospitals, and the wider range of work available for women, they might find it impossible to continue the Training Schools unless drastic changes took place. Mr. Elmer said unless they took the responsibility upon themselves of lightening the hours of labour, those who earned their livelihood might take steps that might be regretted. Nurses had been known to work 13½ and 14 hours a day.

Miss Broadbent reminded the meeting that nearly all the Sisters were called up, and they had the greatest difficulty in obtaining nurses. It was not a question of money. They had an enormous roll of honour won by their nurses. Few people knew what they went through during the influenza epidemic, when they lost seven nurses in one week. She would not have the Infirmary run down, as if the standard of nursing was not high. The Matron came from the London Hospital, which was simply saying the standard of nursing was very high. If they could improve the condition of the nurses they ought to do so.

That enlightened paper, the *Yorkshire Post*, had, last week, a very interesting

article on the unification and co-ordination of hospitals, and referring to the General Infirmary, Leeds, which is finely equipped in every particular for all medical and surgical requirements, the writer says:—"With the addition of the new King Edward wing, the accommodation at the Infirmary is now increased from 520 to 620 beds, but the whole of these are not now available, owing to shortage of nurses. The difficulty can scarcely be said to hinge upon finance, though the finances of the Infirmary just now give special cause for anxiety. The fact is that young women are not now coming forward for training in sufficient numbers at the institution, owing, in the main, to the superior inducements now held out to women in other walks of life. It is, however, remarkable that the great multiplication of the sisterhood occasioned by the war should not have caused more to adopt nursing as a vocation. Anyhow, there is a waiting list of close upon a thousand patients at the Infirmary, and, if more nurses could be got, quite 100 more beds (now vacant) could be put into service."

These are very serious indictments of Training School management by uncontrolled lay committees. These well-meaning yet ignorant people have simply starved out the nursing supply. Had the State stepped in twenty years ago, as we advised, and protected the title of "Registered Nurse," we should have to-day an ample supply of well-educated, well-trained nurses. The fact is, that nursing—which is, as at present organized, merely an avocation for domestic drudges—is slowly dying of inanition. An entirely new system of management is required. Let the Government hurry up and pass the Nurses' Bill, granting status and protecting the nurses from exploitation, and there are plenty of good matrons willing to help reforms if they have a chance; and let it beware of handing the nursing profession over by "force" to the lay control of the College Company, as advocated by Lord Knutsford in the House of Lords, no doubt with the approval of other noble lords who govern hospitals. Let all concerned realise the result of the "sore feelings" before arousing them.

We learn with pleasure that the Scottish Nurses' Club in Glasgow is proving its value to nurses; it is being taxed to its utmost to accommodate the nursing sisters who are travelling at present through Glasgow, after being demobilised, and while making enquiries

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