

A WRONG IMPRESSION OF FACT.

The *American Journal of Nursing* for January contains an exhaustive article by the President of the International Council of Nurses, Miss Nina D. Gage, R.N., M.A., which as a whole is excellent and opportune.

But to two statements we take exception as they are calculated to convey a wrong impression of fact.

According to the *American Journal* it appears:

(1) As if the International Council of Nurses had its origin at a meeting of Nurses in Chicago in 1893, whereas it was not founded until six years later, when Mrs. Bedford Fenwick proposed the organization of such a Federation of National Associations of Nurses, at 20, Hanover Square, London, W., on July 1st, 1899, at the Annual Conference of the Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland.

In 1893 there was no thought of such an organization, and no associations of nurses in existence which could unite to form it.

The only organization of nurses in the world in 1893 was the Royal British Nurses' Association, the Headquarters of which were in London.

(2) The *American Journal of Nursing* appears to be under the impression that the International Council of Nurses, which was naturally quiescent during the Great War, might fail to continue its invaluable work after the Armistice was signed. We can state emphatically that there never was the slightest doubt that as soon as Peace was attained the International Council of Nurses would resume its great responsibilities to the Nurses of the World.

We make this statement without hesitation because, during the War, Headquarters in London kept in constant and friendly touch with the Affiliated Associations, and the subsequent evolution and uprising of the International Council of Nurses, since 1918 have been truly phenomenal.

LEGAL MATTERS.

A number of cases in coroners and law courts have been heard during the last month:

(1) The City Coroner for Oxford investigated the circumstances of the death of a widow, Mrs. Davis, in Coston House Nursing Home for Christian Scientists. Her son-in-law, Mr. J. R. Baker, a University Demonstrator, deposed that a letter was written to the Superintendent of the Home asking for a medical report. The reply was that she could not have a medical examination or report while she was in a Christian Science Home. Later he brought Mrs. Davis to his own house and engaged Dr. West.

Asked by the Coroner if he had any cause for complaint against Mrs. Robinson, the superintendent of Coston House, Mr. Baker said he thought that anybody seeing a person in so emaciated a state should have taken steps immediately to secure medical attention.

Dr. West said when he first saw Mrs. Davis she was very ill. Her condition had been definitely aggravated by lack of medical treatment.

The jury returned a verdict of death from bronchial pneumonia.

(2) A death from misadventure was recorded in the case of a patient in a London Nursing Home, owing to a mistake on the part of a Nurse in copying a prescription, and writing ounces instead of drachms in each case. Prescriptions should invariably be made up from the originals, and we are surprised that any chemist should consent to any other course.

(3) The death of a child strangled in a cot in a hospital ward, caused the Coroner to say that if the type of cot used was not sufficient to protect a child, it should be abolished. It was a matter for the authorities.

"THE LADY WITH A LAMP."

Captain Reginald Berkeley's play, "The Lady with a Lamp," now running at the Garrick Theatre, is, we are expressly told, not a chronicle play, though it is based upon the life of Florence Nightingale, and that "in the broader sense of truth to character, and to the general trend of events the play is historical, but for the purpose of the theatre it has been necessary to use a certain dramatic licence."

Notwithstanding this Captain Berkeley is sincerely to be congratulated, for it is evident that he has studied most carefully and sympathetically the life of the heroine of the play. He could have no more critical observers than trained nurses, jealous of the dignity of the founder of Modern Nursing, and for the honour of their profession, and it is high testimony that nurses who have seen the play have not only expressed their own appreciation and enjoyment of it, but also their opinion that all nurses should see it, especially the younger generation, to many of whom Florence Nightingale is little more than a name.

The two scenes of the first Act are set at Embley Park, the beautiful country seat of Mr. William Nightingale, near Romsey in Hampshire, and it is with the greatest interest that we see represented on the stage characters with whom students of the history of Florence Nightingale are familiar—Mr. and Mrs. Nightingale and their daughter Florence, Lord Palmerston, Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Herbert, Mrs. Bracebridge, and lastly, Henry Tremayne, whose inclusion we presumably owe to the dramatic licence aforementioned.

It must be owned that the first two scenes are the least convincing. Mrs. Nightingale, though no doubt holding in an accentuated form the views of most early Victorian mothers, ambitious for social success, and a successful marriage for her talented daughter, was, after all, a travelled, cultured woman of the world. She surely could not be so vapid and foolish as she is represented.

When Sidney Herbert says, "I honestly do think Miss Nightingale has amazing vision and capacity," Mrs. Nightingale replies, "Thank you, Herbert. That's the very word I wanted. Amazing! Exactly what it is. Amazing! Here's a girl with half the men in London dying to marry her, a beautiful home, I suppose I may say reasonably accommodating parents, and what does she want to do? To be a duchess? Oh, no! To be a political hostess? Oh, no! To be an artist even—and I'm sure she could learn to paint very prettily, or play the pianoforte, or some other ladylike accomplishment. Oh, no! That doesn't attract her. She wants to go into Salisbury Hospital as a common hospital nurse. You're quite right, Mr. Herbert. It is amazing!"

From Lord Palmerston—wise, cynical, kind—Florence receives some encouragement and some excellent advice. "I think nursing is a very fine ambition"; and again—"Don't forget. . . No amount of good will can make up for lack of knowledge. The opportunity is half the battle. But the ability to take it is the other half."

Florence Nightingale answers: "You've given me what I've never had before. Encouragement. It's so lonely and difficult when no one understands."

We cannot dwell on the love scene—with the fountain as medium—when Florence is represented as refusing to marry Henry Tremayne, the man she cares for "infinitely," because she has faith in her Call. It is, at best, apocryphal, but the vision and aspiration to which she gives utterance at its conclusion ring true. "There are multitudes of people wrestling with Death. And there is a place for me among them. . . . God, sanctify my hands for this appointed work, strengthen my spirit to be steadfast in preparing, and firm to reject temptation to turn aside. . . . Take the sacrifice of our love that I may be free for this

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