

## The Nursing Record "At Homes."

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MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK AT 20, UPPER WIMPOLE STREET, LONDON.

LADY who has the courage of her opinions is always an interesting study, and, as such, we may surely look upon Mrs. BEDFORD FENWICK. Her husband is a well-known medical man, and she is an authority in the Nursing world, and a power in the dominion of women.

"Yes, Mrs. FENWICK is at home," says the neat maid-servant, who ushers you into your hostess's presence, and after receiving a cordial welcome, and, at the same time, a cup of tea which, after a shopping expedition in Oxford Street, is particularly refreshing, one has time to admire the charmingly cosy room, the beautiful old Chippendale furniture, the solid, polished mahogany doors, the air of taste and refinement everywhere visible, while some other visitors are taking their leave.

Then the whilom Matron of St. Bartholomew's says: "And what can I do for THE NURSING RECORD. I never lose an opportunity of expressing my gratitude to it for the plucky manner in which it fights the battle of Nursing reform. Did you know, by the bye, that some time ago it was set about, by some of our opponents, that I was the Edith of the RECORD? Fancy me, with all I have to do, managing a paper. You can imagine how amused we were at the excellent opinion of my humble abilities, held by people to whom I am opposed on every Nursing matter."

Mentally contrasting my hostess with the real "chief" who rules at the RECORD Offices, I heartily joined in her laughter, and then said: "But do tell me, Mrs. FENWICK, something about your work, and how you manage to do so much. I see your name on endless Committees, and am always hearing you quoted as a model organizer and worker."

"Well, I am devoted to Nursing, and that now enters into so many charitable schemes, that I have certainly been drawn into a number of undertakings; but the only affairs I really work hard for, are the Royal British Nurses' Association, the Home of Rest for Nurses at Brighton, and a private Hospital which I have started for paying patients."

"Well, I should have thought any one of those would have been enough work for one woman. But now, will you tell me what is the real reason for all the complaints we hear of injustice and tyranny to Nurses, in our large Hospitals?"

"The real truth of the matter," says Mrs. FENWICK, "is that Hospital Committees are, as a rule, composed of gentlemen excellent at business, kind-hearted, philanthropic, and utterly well-meaning, but quite ignorant of Nursing, or domestic, or even medical matters. They are consequently dependent on their servants for direction and guidance, which practically gives unlimited power to any official who cares to grasp it."

"I quite see the danger, because, of course, no public servant should be made an autocrat; but what remedy could be proposed?"

"A most simple one. There should be, and before long I imagine there will be, women on all Hospital Committees, just as there are now women as Poor-Law Guardians, and on School Boards, in nearly every part

of the country. Then every Hospital should have its special Nursing Committee to supervise that department, just as nearly every Hospital now has its Drug Committee, and that would not only ensure justice and fair play to the Nurses, but it would strengthen the Matron's hands, and it would increase efficiency and prevent extravagance to an extent which would astonish the male members of most Committees."

"You think that Hospital Committees will soon have lady members upon them?"

"I do, and I will tell you one reason for my belief. Men will get tired of these constant scandals, which one and all can be traced to mismanagement and lack of knowledge; and they will seek for women colleagues, who would be better able than themselves to understand and sympathise with the female officials. Then they would have some chance of peace and quietness."

"I quite understand," said I, laughing. "But you have not told me, Mrs. FENWICK, of other works in which you are engaged. Is it not the fact that you are taking a somewhat prominent part in the British Section of the Chicago Exhibition?"

"Well, yes, I am. I am going next week to America as the delegate of our Royal Commission, to arrange about the exhibits of British women's work, especially, of course, those of the Nursing Department; and I shall try to persuade our Nursing Sisters to arrange for an International Nursing Congress, to meet during the Exhibition. It would be the first Congress of the kind which I believe has ever been held."

"That would be a great event. Now, forgive me, if I ask just one more question. What is this Volunteer Nursing Scheme?"

"The entire credit of that belongs to Princess CHRISTIAN. It was pointed out to her that the cure of Cholera is largely dependent upon the care with which the medical directions and treatment were carried out. She immediately inquired what preparations were made for nursing

Cholera patients; found that in many towns, which in previous epidemics were decimated in population, there might not be a single Nurse available for Cholera cases, and that most Hospitals could only rely on their ordinary staff, who would consequently be as powerless to cope with an influx of Cholera patients as they would be to efficiently nurse whole wards full of Typhoid Fever cases. So she proposed the Volunteer scheme, and I believe every Nurse who possesses any love of her work or humanity, and who is not already attached to some Institution, will hasten to enrol her name on the list. A special Committee has been appointed, and during the winter we shall organise and teach the Volunteers, so that, if the Cholera comes in the spring, we shall be able in twelve hours, from the receipt of a telegram from the Sanitary Authority of any invaded district, to send down one or more Nurses to assist them. So, if the Cholera comes, I believe that numberless lives may be saved, thanks to the wise foresight of the Princess. If it does not come, she has once more proved her wisdom and her ever ready sympathy; and British Nurses will have proved that they are as ready as medical men proverbially are, to go where danger is, in order to relieve sickness and suffering."

And just then, other visitors arriving, I felt it incumbent upon me to thank my kind hostess for her most interesting information, and to take my leave.

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