

LOCAL CENTRES.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

MADAM,—I am glad you have given us the benefit of your opinion concerning the scheme propounded in the *Nurses' Journal* re "Local Centres" for the Royal British Nurses' Association. The first thing of course which strikes an experienced Matron upon reading the article in question, is that it is written by a person who has had a smattering of training in some institution, by which she has been constituted that most dangerous element to professional progress the "semi-trained Nurse." Of course I may be wrong, and the writer may have absolutely no experience of Nurses' needs and aspirations; one thing at least is clear, that she has no practical experience of the class of workers of whom she writes, or she would not advance so many absurd suggestions.

As a Matron of many years' experience of Nursing in a country town, I feel that I ought to protest against any attempt being made by the Royal British Nurses' Association (until lately the leader of professional thought in the country) in the direction of suggestions put forward by the anonymous writer in the *Journal* of the Association, especially with regard to professional women "being organised" by "doctors' daughters," or indeed by any "daughters" who have not been trained as Nurses. Figure to yourself, as the French say, the result of this interference upon the part of "doctors' daughters" in a country town with the Nurses of the county Hospital—the attempt to gather together the Nurses in professional association, irrespective of the Matron of the Hospital; imagine the lack of discipline and *esprit de corps* involved in such a system. "Patronage" again is a very ill-favoured expression, and I think my colleagues will agree with me that "patronage" is the last impertinence to which the working gentlewoman will permit herself to be submitted, either by "doctors' daughters," or any other persons.

In this Hospital of which I have been Matron for several years (there are only three Hospitals in the town), we have our own most comfortable reading room, and extensive library for the Nursing Staff. Our Committee and Medical Staff have interested themselves in both, and I feel sure they would with myself consider it very undesirable to have a common Club Room in the town, where the Nursing Staffs of the three Hospitals would constantly meet. Nurses have not much time off duty, and they should be encouraged to spend it altogether outside the Hospital and its associations, mixing with friends whose lines of work are quite different to their own, and from whom they can receive fresh impressions and valuable interchange of thought. I therefore condemn unhesitatingly the suggestions set forth with such fulsome humility in the *Nurses' Journal*, that our country Nurses should encourage the *patronage* of any person, and I consider the present tone of the *Journal* simply impertinent.

I am, &c.,

Yours,

"A COUNTRY MATRON."

"READING ALOUD."

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

DEAR EDITOR,—Knowing that you are widely interested in anything that tends to promote knowledge, I venture to offer a few words touching upon the value of elocution as an art. I trust you will accord them space in your valuable paper.

In these days of culture and strenuous effort to gain applause, it is strange that except with the rare few a good style of reading and speaking is more or less neglected. Even in schools, elocution is rarely taught, and I have been shocked at the parrot-like fashion in which young people repeat their lessons, quite without character or feeling. Elocution embraces so much—by its study the human voice can be brought to perfection, and speaking charm, equally with

singing, and the former is with us always. A beautiful song gladdens for the hour and passes away, a beautiful speaking voice makes all association a joy, and although a handsome face gives pleasure, a rich, full, natural voice gives far the greater. I once heard a well-known professional say to another, "You can do much with your face, but nothing with your voice." There is little doubt as to which would make the success. Mere physical beauty might please the few, culture must predominate. Wide and free opening of the mouth will help to produce purity of sound, and if the voice is properly under control there is no need to raise it to the loud, harsh pitch, so general and so painful; it is used from lack of knowledge, believing that to be heard it is necessary to shout. No effort should be used, the words should appear to fall, as from a gently flowing stream.

If the real value of good speaking were known, society would confer pleasure instead of more often pain. Whether reading, reciting, or conversing, our faultless English language correctly treated holds power, and therefore I argue that elocution ranks with the highest professions of the day.

The most illiterate sick in our hospitals can enjoy good reading, and I hope Nurses generally will consider my words and devote a little of their spare time to cultivate this art. How many sufferers would hail with joy a Nurse who read with expression and a gentle, pure tone, and so with all classes. Many consider elocution only for the stage, others avoid it, fearing to become artificial; on the contrary, the proper study of the art must do away with all that is false and unnatural, rendering the meaning clear, and by right expression conveying a picture to the mind of the listener, increasing pleasure tenfold, until one may almost see what is thus portrayed. For those who seek to give happiness, voice culture has more outlets than almost any other resource. In joy or sorrow it is alike potent to express rapture or sympathy, either silvery parlance or dulcet tones. The points of benefit derived from this power are too numerous to delineate except at great length. To the nervous it is invaluable, giving confidence; and conversation, hitherto a trial, becomes a pleasure. A gentleman public speaker, was heard to say that although he could command language and was never at a loss for words, they made little or no impress given without right inflections or emphasis, and in a nervous disjointed manner they fell unheeded, instead of carrying effect and compelling the attention merited, and this because he lacked the power that voice culture alone gives. Clear and distinct utterance, correct pronunciation, with appropriate and graceful gesture, are all essential to good speaking, and when aided by intense, earnest feeling, soul, and eloquence that compels and rivets attention and admiration, may be attained. I have read that delivery is the one thing in speaking which is supreme, without it the greatest orator can achieve nothing, with it persons of mediocre ability can often surpass the greatest. I do not say that a voice can be produced, but it can be wonderfully and effectively improved.

Ruskin says: "If I could leave a son or daughter possessed of but one accomplishment, it should be that of good reading!"

I will conclude by hoping that the National Council of Women, about to be organised, will give due consideration to elocution as a science, and form a distinct section to rank with professional musicians.

M. B.

"TIGHT LACING AND TEA."

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

MADAM,—Do away with "Tight lacing and Tea" and we women would become inhuman. Why not attack "Pipes and Pick-me-ups?" We must not relinquish our little weaknesses until the superior sex set the example.

Yours,

"CORSETTI."

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