



Letters to the Editor.

Notes, Queries, &c.

Whilst cordially inviting communications upon all subjects for these columns, we wish it to be distinctly understood that we do not IN ANY WAY hold ourselves responsible for the opinions expressed by our correspondents.

THE REGISTRATION OF ASYLUM ATTENDANTS AS NURSES.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM,—I should like to support Miss Sophia Wingfield in her protest against the assertion made in a public newspaper by Dr. Outterson Wood that "it is not the hospital nurses themselves who resist the claims of mental nurses; it is the narrow-minded policy of a few who would restrict the aims and scope of the Royal British Nurses' Association."

As Secretary of the Registered Nurses' Society, I have had ample opportunity of hearing the opinions of a number of thoroughly-trained "hospital nurses" certificated in a variety of Nursing Schools, and I have never heard one nurse express an opinion which is not *strongly opposed* to placing upon the Register of Trained Nurses the names of male and female asylum attendants who have not been trained in General Hospital wards. Those registered nurses with whom I have spoken who have been trained in general hospitals and also in asylums for the insane, and who have therefore the right to the title "mental nurse," are *more strongly* opposed to Dr. Outterson Wood's scheme than those who have no experience of asylum work.

Now that the Asylum Workers' Association has been founded, and is about to compile a Register of its own, there can be no shadow of excuse for depreciating the standard for registration by the Royal British Nurses' Association. Those nurses who, like myself, hold a certificate of three years' training from a general hospital and who have been intimately connected with the Association since its inception, consider that the new measure would be grievously unjust and unpardonable, and could have but one result, the ultimate ruin of all confidence in the beneficial effects of the Register in the opinions of both qualified nurses and the public. Can it be that this result is desired by those who are known to inspire the present policy of the Association, and who have in the past pursued us with such bitter animosity.

I am, dear Madam,

Yours faithfully,

S. CARTWRIGHT, M.R.B.N.A.
Secretary Registered Nurses' Society.

ON ADDING THE NAMES OF TRAINED MENTAL NURSES TO THE REGISTER OF THE ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

February 17th, 1897.

MADAM,—I should like, with your permission, to say a few words on the above subject, which still claims the careful consideration of every nurse.

We who have at heart the welfare of trained nurses as a corporation, apart from the interest of any special association, must be agreed on the following points, viz.: (1) That it is to the advantage of trained nurses that their names appear on a Register of such. (2) That this holds good, not for those only who have trained in general hospitals, but for each one in her own special department of work. (3) That such a Register would be invaluable to matrons in selecting nurses, to nurses in obtaining appointments, and to the public in securing trained nurses.

Now, to my mind, until such a Register is the admitted evidence of a nurse's training, our professional standing is insecure.

The Royal British Nurses' Association has issued a Register, *but it is incomplete*. It contains only the names of nurses who have served in general hospitals. This Register can only be completed by throwing open its columns to all nurses who have gained certificates of proficiency in their several branches.

I consider it would be an admirable effort of the Royal British Nurses' Association to, if possible, compile a complete Register of Trained Nurses, and that we need fear no degradation from this step. In the *Medical Directory* our most learned physicians and skilled surgeons are placed in alphabetical order with those who have the least qualification on which they can practise, and do not appear to consider themselves debased by this proximity of names.

We would raise columns between our names and those of our less qualified (?) sisters, and still fear the evidences of contact!

But women are, apparently, more susceptible to these subtle derogatory influences than men.

Such a Register cannot ensure competency or experience. That at present in use does not do this. But it would ensure the necessary qualifications for practice, and the nurse (whether medical, surgical, fever, maternity, massage, or *even mental*) whose name would appear on such a Register would be to the profession and the public a qualified nurse, whilst she who fails so to register herself could not be regarded as such.

This opens out another field for argument, and in this, therefore, probably lies the chief merit of my letter.

I am, Madam,

Yours faithfully,

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[We would remind our correspondent that there can be no analogy between asylum attendants, or, as she terms them, trained mental nurses, and the registered medical man with a minimum qualification, because whereas the former is trained in one branch of work only, every registered medical practitioner has passed through a complete curriculum of medical education, most of which must be acquired *in the wards of a general hospital containing over 100 beds*. No medical student who has only gained experience in a hospital for the insane can be registered as capable of treating patients suffering from mental disease. On the same principle no nurse has a right to be registered as capable of nursing sick people, sane or insane, until she has also passed through a complete general training.—ED.]

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