



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.

NURSES AND LADY PRIESTLEY.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

MADAM,—The word "Nurse" seems of latter times to have acted as a red rag to a bull as regards certain persons, who have thought fit to take up the subject of nursing and to comment thereon in no mild or charitable manner.

All great movements, before they attain to limits of excellence, must pass through a "fiery trial" of one kind or another, and the great nursing movement is now in the throes of the fiery furnace of criticism, and it remains for earnest women, who have the profession of nursing truly at heart, to draw it purified and unscathed from the fiery trial of bitter, malicious, and injurious tongues.

When one reads such an article as that written by Lady Priestley, entitled, "Nurses à la mode," one cannot help exclaiming, "Oh for the rarity of Christian charity under the sun!" and one wonders that a woman should not do her utmost to defend and to strive to find out the best points, actions, and intentions of her own sex—to which sex the nursing profession belongs.

It seems with the nursing profession that it is judged by the mistakes, the faults, and the misdemeanours of the few, not by the devoted conduct of the hundreds of good and honourable women who are working with noble aims and motives and proving themselves an honour to their calling.

Lady Priestley mentions a few cases against nurses of a most disgraceful character, and it is to be deeply regretted that such cases exist, and we are fully aware that they do; but there are adventurers and adventuresses in all professions, and it seems a hard and cruel thing that these few special and shameful cases should have been put forward as the only examples of nurses. Because officers of the army or navy have been cashiered for misconduct, or because for malpractices a medical man has to be struck off the Register, does it blast each of these professions as a whole, and drag every member of each—soldiers, sailors, and medical men—alike through the mire and place them on a par with those who have disgraced themselves? No! emphatically no! But then, these are the professions of *men*, and the Nursing Profession is a *women's* profession, and until the past generation and probably many of the present one have passed away, women's work will either be condemned and belittled or not receive its due, however good, useful, and honourable it may be.

When Lady Priestley writes about nurses is she sure that she is alluding to "trained, disciplined" nurses? For in the present day "nurses" and "trained, disciplined nurses" are different beings.

The worst kind of nurse is she who has never been subjected to any long period of discipline and strict supervision in hospital, and many of the Nursing Institutions of the day have much to answer for, for the way our profession is dragged through the mud. I speak this from experience, knowing the kind of so-called nurse who, having had little or no training or discipline worth calling such, is accepted on to the nursing staff of so many institutions, bringing the whole profession of nursing into such disrepute in the mind of the public. No direct personal supervision is extended to nurses working from institutions or on their own account, and therein lies the great evil. If the plan of inspection of nurses and their work carried out by the Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute could be universally established amongst private nurses, all might be different.

As to the training of nurses, surely the best and most perfect should be aimed at; not a smattering of learning such as can only be acquired in a one year's training. The London flower girls are not allowed by their employers to make up a large bouquet until they have served a probation time of three years. Is the nursing of the sick of less importance and of greater facility than the making up of a bouquet? Surely nurses cannot have too long a training to enable them to nurse with experience, reasoning intelligence, and proper justice to the sick of all classes?

Lady Priestley seems unaware that there are male nurses in existence, who are obtainable by those who desire them. Still, the nursing of the sick has from time immemorial been woman's province. Gentleness, patience, long-suffering, and conformity to discipline, with a natural aptitude for the performance of constant trivial details, are inherent to the female sex. Few men would conform to the enforced performance of all the little hundred and one things in hospital which are essentially in woman's province.

Lady Priestley says: "With us the nursing of the sick has long been dissociated from religion." This is erroneous, for there are many Anglican Nursing Sisterhoods, and also Religious Guilds for Nurses at the present time.

Even if there were not, is there no such thing as a conscientious performing, from a pure and high motive, of the duties which lie to hand, whether great or small, important or insignificant, which from day to day and hour to hour are constantly before each one of us? I think so; and many will with me, I feel sure, call such a performance of duty a form of true "religion."

Cannot other women have always before them the "Cross of Jesus Christ" besides those who are "darkly robed in saintly garb" and have taken upon themselves the vows required by the Roman Catholic Religious Sisterhoods?

It would be hard to think that all were excluded from striving to attain to the highest of all goals, but those who by virtue of their vows were *obliged* to lead the so-called highest life.

Let us hope that in the future more Christian charity will be extended to women, and especially to those women who, through laborious and often health-destroying work, have striven and still strive to recover from the jaws of death or from lasting sickness the bodies of their suffering fellows.

I am, Madam, yours, etc.,

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