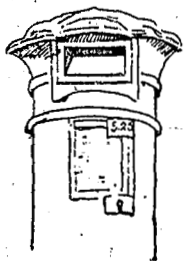


Letters to the Editor.

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.

REGISTRATION.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM,—Is it not nearly time that some steps were taken to protect trained nurses from the shame which is brought upon them by those who disgrace their profession? Surely their plea for registration is not only just, but an urgent necessity for the protection of the public. After the way in which nurses have figured in the press of late, one cannot wonder at the public being somewhat chary of admitting private nurses into their houses. The remedy may be worse than the disease. Other professions have registers from which they erase the names of those who have proved themselves unworthy to remain upon them. The medical profession were careful to dissociate themselves from Dr. Collins, and to make public the fact that he had been removed from the Medical Register. When Mr. Clarke made himself busy over the affairs of St. Michael's, Shore-ditch, Lord Halifax wrote to the *Church Times* to point out that his name did not appear in Crockford. But nurses have no power to dissociate themselves from persons who do not belong to their calling, or from those who do who have brought discredit upon it. We musn't have a register. It is "inexpédient, injurious to the best interests of nurses." So we are told. It isn't the nurses who think so, and surely we should have some say in the management of our own concerns.

Yours faithfully,
A BIRMINGHAM WOMAN.

THE PLAGUE IN BOMBAY.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM—I have been on plague duty for over a year in Bombay, and am one of the English nurses who are described as "practically useless" in the letter by "Outsider" in the *Pioneer*, and inserted in the *Nursing Record*, and I feel I would like to give a few facts and a little of my experience while nursing plague.

"Outsider" speaks of the Indian women "who bravely volunteered," etc., etc., for plague duty. I have worked with several. As a rule, two or three months is the sum total of their training. They were, for the most part, Eurasian women who wished to make money for the maintenance of their numerous children, and also orphan girls of a low class sent out from schools.

When I arrived at Arthur Road Hospital, things seemed to be in a hopeless condition. The Indian-trained nurse (?) trusted everything to the Ayahs (two of whom had periodical fits of drunkenness) and ward boys, and she rarely gave a feed or medicine herself. The important medicines (opiates, etc.) she measured

out and gave to the ward boy or Ayah to administer. As to feeding of patients. When I came on duty, I asked when the feeds were due, and was told the Ayah "sees to that!" I saw the Ayah "seeing to that." She filled a feeder with milk and poured a few drops down each patient's mouth in turn, using the same feeder and quite reckless as to whether they took it or vomited it. This said, "feeding" was done at odd times as she thought of it!

Then as to the washing of the cases. This same nurse told me the Ayah did that! I watched the process. A small basin (one of those used by convalescents to drink milk or eat *congée* out of) was filled with water, and with a dirty little piece of sponge the Ayah wiped the patients' faces and hands. There was no soap or towel in the hospital for the use of the patients. The dressing of buboes was done on the same principle by the Ayahs and ward boys.

Then as to their advantage over us in knowing the language. As a rule it was with great difficulty one could get some of them to translate. They rarely used it, and the darker in color the nurse happened to be, the less able she was to speak. We soon picked up enough to make ourselves understood, and could always get the little history of the illness from the patients' friends that was required.

The training out here may be excellent, but it is entirely different to our training. The nurses do not make beds or wash cases, and rarely feed them. For other work sweepers are kept, and no nurse gives a bed pan, however acutely ill a patient is. I often saw the sweeper dragging a dying patient out of bed and standing him up while a soiled sheet was removed.

From Arthur Road I went to Cutch Mandvi, and after some weeks there returned to Arthur Road. The change was remarkable. The patients were clean, and had night clothes on. They were fed systematically, always by the English Nurses *themselves*. Poultices and fomentations put on regularly. (Before, poultices were rarely changed in the night, it was impossible to get hot water or almost anything between the hours of 12 and 3 p.m., when the ward assistants all slept, as a matter of course.) Beds and medicine bottles numbered and named. Charts kept up to date, and innumerable little things unheard of in the Plague wards, which were done as a matter of routine every day at home, according to our training.

The ward assistants rarely take an order from an Eurasian Nurse, but they were always obedient and respectful to us. We got them into good order, and they swept and cleaned the wards very nicely. There their work (except a little fetching and carrying of water and waiting on us to get medicines from the dispensary) as far as what they did for the patients ended.

The Medical Officer in charge of Arthur Road Hospital marked the change, and applied to have more English nurses to work in the fresh wards, when they were opened.

Outside Hospitals (not under Government or the Plague Committee) also asked for us to take charge of their Wards.

The English nurses stood the climate well, and rarely had fever, while the Eurasian nurses were constantly off duty with fever and other ailments, and when on duty went about their work with an extreme air of lassitude and general seediness. As to their knowledge of treating plague, no one knew anything

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)