

ON THE RIGHT ROAD.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM,—I was much interested in Dr. Arkle's letter in your issue of last week, in which he gives high praise to the admirable training and teaching afforded at the Lewisham Infirmary, the result of which is evident upon walking round the wards. One is very well aware that the enforcement of a high standard of training results in increased efficiency and discipline, and therefore of benefit to the sick. If this is possible at Lewisham, why not in other infirmaries, and yet how many infirmaries there are in which the nursing is bad, the discipline slack, and the sick do not therefore receive the attention to which they are entitled. The reason for this undoubtedly is that the nurses are not systematically educated and taught how to perform their duties in the best manner. A Matron or Superintendent Nurse, who accepts office meaning to do her duty in this respect finds, so often, that she receives no support, and that indeed there is so frequently so much bitter opposition to her attempt to raise the standard of nursing and maintain discipline, on the part of the Guardians, and I regret to say also of medical men, that too often she gives in. Either she accepts what seems to her to be the inevitable, that is to say a standard lower than that which she knows to be the right one, or her health breaks down, or she resigns, overcome with despair at the impossibility of doing her duty. And so the inefficient and unsuitable reign supreme, and abuses flourish. But what the Lewisham Board of Guardians has done other Boards can do. The matter in a nutshell, seems to me to be for Guardians to determine to give their nurses as efficient an education as possible, to see to it that they have definite courses of lectures, with examinations in which an examiner unconnected with the Infirmary is associated with the Medical Superintendent, and in which the Matron, who should associate with herself a nursing expert, also takes part. The necessary freedom in the carrying out of details should be left to the Medical Superintendent and Matron, and the nurses should understand that their legitimate authority will be invariably supported. An Infirmary so managed, as is the case at Lewisham, reflects credit upon all concerned, and last but not least, the sick are efficiently nursed. And in such an Infirmary there will be no difficulty in getting the best superintendence, whether medical or nursing. It is in those institutions where discipline is known to be lax that well-trained nurses hesitate to apply for vacant posts. There are very many women willing and able to do good and hard work, but there are few who can stand the strain of personal opposition, abuse, intimidation, and insult, and it is this which is usually their portion in effecting any reforms.

I am, Dear Madam, Yours faithfully,
AN OBSERVANT WOMAN.

IS IT DISCIPLINE OR TYRANNY?

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM,—In the course of my enquiries about the London hospitals, with a view to entering one of them as a probationer, I learned, to my astonishment, that at the Marylebone Infirmary a rule is in force, forbidding Staff Nurses to hold any communication with probationers when off duty; not only in the Infirmary, but also *in the street or in a shop*. Could anyone conceive of a more tyrannical and unreasonable rule? Suppose a junior and a senior probationer to be friends, the senior becomes Staff Nurse, and from that moment she and her friend are as completely separated

as though they lived a hundred miles apart—Forbidden to speak if they meet in the street. Now what possible right can any governing body have to subject educated professional women to such an indignity? Why, even the law of England could not compel me to cut my friend in the street, and certainly a Board of Guardians would have no right to do so merely because I happened to be in their employ. It seems incredible that the nurses should have tolerated such a regulation for a moment, and in no other women's profession that I can think of would a like infringement of personal liberty be possible; no factory manager would dream of forbidding his forewoman to speak to the work-girls outside the gates; he knows the independent spirit of the British work-woman too well; and surely the trained nurse ought to receive more, not less, trust and respect from her employers, than the British workwoman.

Can we wonder that the officials of the R.B.N.A. have been allowed to ride rough-shod over their Association, and that you, Madam, have been thwarted at every turn in your efforts for freedom by the inertia and indifference of the great bulk of the nurses, when the whole training of many of these women is calculated to crush out every spark of independence and responsibility, and to develop, not legal, open-eyed obedience, but the most blind and childish submissiveness?

It is peculiarly trying to any educated modern woman to realise that if she adopts nursing as her profession, she must expect to be subjected to such petty tyranny as is indicated by this rule which I bring to your notice, and to be treated not like a well-disciplined student, but like an irresponsible schoolgirl.

Yours truly,
AN INTENDING PROBATIONER.

REGISTRATION.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

MADAM,—I read with pleasure in your issue of last week the letter on the subject of Registration by G. De Valay. The argument that human beings need at least as much care as animals seems unanswerable, and I, for one, look forward to the time when no member of the public will think of admitting to his house a nurse whose name is not entered on the State Register.

There is one point however which I should like, with your permission, to bring forward with regard to registration. We read about a Bill for the registration of medical, surgical, and obstetric nurses, and certainly it would appear reasonable that nurses should be registered on these lines, but at the same time we must face the fact that, comparatively, exceedingly few nurses possess an obstetric qualification. Very few training schools afford their pupils any facilities of obtaining obstetric training. It is my experience indeed, that most encourage their nurses to think that obstetric work is "an entirely different branch," and that they are fully qualified after three years medical and surgical work, with, possibly, a little gynæcological experience. I wonder, by the way, how many nurses know the difference between gynæcological and obstetric work? I am inclined to think that the large proportion of them believe that the former includes the latter. If, however, we are to have a Bill for the registration of medical, surgical, and obstetrical nurses, it behoves nurses who wish to register to qualify in obstetric work, the sooner the better, and I must say I think the responsibility which rests with the heads of training schools is great in this matter.

Yours faithfully,
AN OBSTETRIC NURSE.

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