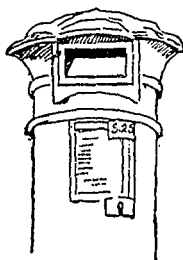


Letters to the Editor.

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.

STATE REGISTRATION FOR NURSES.

To the Editor of the "Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM,—It is to be hoped that the unanimous vote at the Matrons' Council Conference, which was passed so enthusiastically last week, will be followed by some active and united action upon the part of those Matrons and Nurses, who realize the present degrading condition of nursing affairs. The fact that the two leading medical papers have maintained a discreet silence on the subject of the Matrons' Meeting, in plain English, have "boycotted" their professional protest against the helpless position of the sick, and the abuses rife in the nursing world, is not calculated to inspire the public or nurses with any hope for help from those who control the medical literature of the day. That many medical men, *i.e.*, the managers of the R.B.N.A. and conservative corporations, are bitterly antagonistic to any measure of justice and protection either to patients or trained nurses is now a realised fact. But, on the other hand, I have spoken with many medical men, holding permanent appointments under the Local Government Board, whose self interest does not prevent them forming a right conclusion on this important question, and they are *one and all* heartily in favour of guarding the sick, both rich and poor from the machinations of the unscrupulous adventuress, the "bogus" half-trained nurse. London nurses will agree with me that matters in this city have reached a most scandalous pitch, when any night in the Strand and Piccadilly women wearing a travesty of nursing uniform, dyed and painted, may be seen soliciting men in these thoroughfares, making assignations and *walking off arm-in-arm* with men of infamous character. Such horrible sights have been seen more than once.

Three times within the last year so-called nurses (their qualifications are apparently taken on trust in the Court over which Sir Francis Jeune presides) have figured as co-respondents in cases of great infamy, and yet we know that their credentials are retained, and there is no law to prevent these loose women continuing to nurse, or as you have pertinently remarked, "combine the two professions." Indeed, from evidence I have of the lives lived in flats by some of these hybrids, these two professions appear to "dovetail" admirably.

Then we have the "bogus nurse farm," combined with the now notorious West End Home Hospital, which you have wiped down in "Echoes" this week, supported as they must be by medical men, and concerning the management of which you suggested a *Lancet* commission. Nurses who have worked in some of these institutions can a "pretty tale unfold."

Then take Army Nursing affairs, where all through

this calamitous South African campaign trained nurses have been "commandeered" by society women and untrained "patrons," and where hundreds of well-trained women have been superseded by the half-trained woman with social influence. Poor Tommy! But enough, *l'affaire Coutts*, we may hope will do something to decrease his sufferings in the future.

And like the proverbial "flea," so on *ad infinitum*. The condition of affairs is simple. No one who knows anything of nursing matters can deny their present chaotic condition, or that the sick and the trained nurses are victims to this lack of organization. I want to support the suggestion of "One who is willing to work for it," made last week, that an association should be definitely formed to obtain State Registration for nurses—and for no other purpose whatever. We must then all come out for or against this much-needed reform, and give our reasons for so doing; the public will then know where they are. The Registrationists and the "Anti's" will begin fair, they will each have their organ in the press—and Sir Henry Burdett and his friends in the R.B.N.A. must come off the hedge. The position of affairs is quite plain—

1. The Registrationists claim protection for the sick rich and poor from the half-trained woman, the drunkard, the prostitute, the thief, and adventuress, the forger, and other criminals, by State Registration of thoroughly trained nurses, holding certificates of three years' training in a well organized general hospital.

2. The "Anti's" protest against such a righteous measure of justice and protection for the Trained Nurse and the Patient.

That is the position of affairs in a nutshell, and that is the simple truth which must be spread from one end of the land to the other.

No mere assertions of the "Anti's" that in their personal opinion the principle of legal protection is "inexpedient" and "doubtful" will hold water if the public once understand that it is a question for them of self-preservation from the quack, drunkard, prostitute, thief and forger, now given a free hand to pose as trained nurses, to wear the uniform, and thus enter their houses under false pretences and swindle them; and of protecting them from these harpies by an Act of Parliament granting legal status to the large class of thoroughly trained, moral, and devoted women who hold certificates of efficiency from reputable training schools, and who deserve the protection of the State equally with medical men.

We must have no side issues—no red herrings.

Just simply—shall the sick and nurses have justice and protection, or shall they not?

The Registrationists say, "Give us protection." The "Antis" say, "You shan't have it." The Registrationists say, "We will no longer be herded and classed with the quack and criminal." The "Antis" say, "The quack and the criminal shall share and share alike with the trained and honest woman." The Registrationists claim protection for the sick from the quack and the criminal. The "Antis" say, "The public must take care of itself." *Voila tout.*

A thousand apologies for length of letter and force of language, but circumstances demand both.

Yours,

MARGARET BREAY,

Hon. Sec. Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland.

Lowestoft.

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