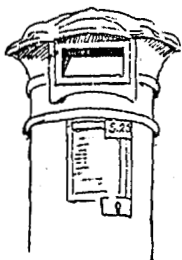


Letters to the Editor.

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 IMPORTANCE OF TRIFLES.

To the Editor of the "Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM,—I was very glad to see that in your admirable journal last week you drew attention to the importance of a quiet and restrained deportment of nurses in hospitals. I am sure your remarks were timely. But, it is, in my opinion, even more necessary to give this advice to private nurses, perhaps because my observation of nurses has been chiefly confined to this class, and the urgency of some rule, written or unwritten, which shall regulate their behaviour is therefore impressed upon me.

It seems to me that what we want before all things in private nurses is breeding. They would then avoid instinctively so many of the pitfalls which stamp them as vulgar and mar their work. By breeding I do not, of course, mean that they should necessarily have "blue blood," but that they should be women of refinement and sensibility, and these virtues, be it noted, are not to be found exclusively, or always, in any social stratum. Vulgarity may be found amongst duchesses, and refinement amongst the working classes. Perhaps you will allow me to give an illustration of the manners (or lack of them) which I have known amongst private nurses. It is within my knowledge that two nurses were sent down to a provincial town to a patient who was critically ill. It was considered by the family a more comfortable arrangement in every way that a sitting room where they could be quite free when off duty, and where they might have their meals should be allotted to them, and this was therefore arranged. The only available room was the Servants' Hall, and the domestics not only expressed their readiness to live in the kitchen but took a pleasure in making an already comfortable room still more comfortable for the reception of the nurses. On their arrival these women declined to use the room, and gave directions to the servants to bring their meals up to the dressing-room attached to their patient's bedroom, their one and only objection to the room assigned to them being that it was the wrong side of the green baize door leading to the servants' quarters.

Now I ask you, Madam, whether any well-mannered person would issue directions to servants at variance to those given by the head of the house, and would any nurse who had the welfare of her patient at heart desire to consume fried bacon practically in her room? It is breaches of ordinary good manners, such as this, which lower the reputation of nurses, and not all their skilled professional work, for which the public really are grateful, atones for them. If only nurses could, simultaneously with their other training, receive

instruction in the proprieties not only a long suffering public, but they themselves also would benefit materially.

I am, dear Madam,

Yours faithfully,

A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC.

THE EIGHT HOURS' DAY.

To the Editor of the "Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM,—Your correspondent, "Matron of a Poor Hospital," asked a pertinent question when she wished to know what would happen if the eight hours' day were enforced in the case of Matrons and Ward Sisters. Imagine the condition of a hospital with three Matrons in charge of the nursing department! Again, how would the public like to pay the fees of three persons when they require private nurses? The public indeed are some of the worst offenders with regard to keeping nurses on duty for long hours. Nor do they appreciate the strain upon a conscientious woman of being responsible, asleep or awake, for the well-being of her patient. It is because the conditions of private nursing are so exacting that nurses for the most prefer to work for a comparatively low salary in a well ordered institution. The mistake at the root of this eight hours' agitation is, that those who advocate it are trying to legislate for nursing as a trade rather than as a profession, and it is for this reason that their proposition will be found to be quite unworkable. Imagine the attempt to legislate for medical men or diplomatists on similar lines! I mention the latter class because I have just been reading that most interesting book, "Shifting Scenes," by Sir Edward Malet, and he tells that during the whole time he was Minister Plenipotentiary at Constantinople he ended his working day at 2 a.m., and began it again at 7 o'clock, this not choice, but because the exigencies of the work demanded it. So with trained nurses. Imagine a law as to an eight hours day put into practice. Take for instance the only nurse available on duty with a dying patient; the eight hours is up; is she to leave her patient to unskilled attendance, or to die alone, or must she remain with him and so run the risk of being hauled up for breaking the law of the land? Legislation on such lines is manifestly absurd. It would never be proposed by those who are "in the know."

I am, dear madam,

Yours very truly,

REASON IN ROASTING EGGS.

"ON ASEPTIC PRINCIPLES."

DEAR MADAM.—I have heard of late on so many sides of the growing objection of staff nurses to attend to the physical necessities of their patients, and to give them the bed-pan when required, that I fear there is a sub-stratum of truth in the report. The latest argument advanced by one of these nurses was that she objected to performing this necessary duty "on aseptic principles!" Will the next step be that nurses decline to wash new patients for the same reason? Such nurses seem to forget that there is such a thing as soap and water for their own hands."

Yours faithfully,

AN INDIGNANT MATRON.

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