



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.

MR. DOUGLAS BRYAN'S SCHEME FOR NURSING ORGANISATION.

To the Editor of the "British Journal of Nursing."

DEAR MADAM,—I have read with extreme interest both Mr. Douglas Bryan's scheme for nursing organisation and also the correspondence which has followed his letter. It seems to me a happy moment for this correspondence to have been evoked. In the opinion of many of us there is urgent need for organisation in the nursing world. Inside the hospitals it is true that there is a certain amount of discipline and order, but as regards the standard of training enforced by them we soon find ourselves brought up with a round turn, for when we come to estimate the value of certificates we find that the term "trained nurse" has no definite meaning. There is no minimum standard of education, no minimum period of training, no approach to uniformity in examination and certification. We have even in connection with the twelve great London training-schools certificates given at the end of one, two, and three years' training. How is a bewildered public to differentiate between the value of these certificates? And, if this can be said of the "leading" training-schools, beyond these again we have special hospitals, cottage hospitals, private nursing homes, all offering to train nurses and giving certificates for this training for periods ranging between six weeks and four years. Who is to estimate the value of such certification? It can only be done by a professional governing authority which will define what constitutes an efficient nursing education and the minimum period of training. We are probably, therefore, all agreed as to the necessity for a Central Nursing Board.

As to its constitution, I note that Mr. Bryan suggests this Council should consist of medical men (why not medical practitioners?), nurses, and a representative of the law. The suggestion seems reasonable enough. We have all of us in our time thought that medicine and nursing being so intimately associated the medical profession should have representation on nursing bodies; but those of us who have had practical experience of the working of such organisation have learnt that it is fundamentally wrong. Miss Poole strikes the right note when she says that if we are to be a professional body we must be self-governing. Look at it as we will, this is what Mr. Sydney Holland calls *bed-rock*. Of this I am certain, that no organisation on other lines will prove successful in the working in the long run. We may take a lesson here from the constitution of the General Medical Council. Medicine and nursing being so intimately associated, do we find a representative of the nursing profession even co-opted on to the General Medical Council to advise on nursing points? Certainly not. Nor do I personally think it would be desirable. The General Medical Council is

composed, as a professional body should be, exclusively of representatives of the class governed. Medical men represent the medical colleges and the universities, medical men are nominated by His Majesty with the advice of his Privy Council, medical men are elected as the direct representatives of the profession in the United Kingdom.

The General Nursing Council should be constituted in the same way. Let both Councils be formed entirely of representatives of the professions concerned, then let the relations between these two bodies be intimate and cordial. Let the Nursing Council submit its schemes to the General Medical Council for suggestions and criticism by all means. Such a procedure would be most valuable and would prove conclusively that we appreciate the advice of our professional superiors. I am convinced that by such means the dignity, both of medicine and nursing, would be best safeguarded. The other element in the Nursing Council proposed by Mr. Bryan, the representative of the law, I should remove on the ground explained above—the principle of self-government; but, of course, the Council would need a legal adviser, whose opinion it would pay for.

I have exceeded the limits of a letter, so must not touch on other points further than to say I consider that evidence of skill in medical, surgical, and gynaecological nursing should be required of every woman who wishes to rank as a trained nurse. This should be the minimum practical qualification. Three years' training in hospital or infirmary wards the shortest period of time. There must also be a bed limit, though personally I consider the importance of this point is apt to be over-rated. In a large hospital each ward is practically a small self-contained hospital, to which a nurse's experience is confined for the time being, and, as the classification of cases is much more systematised in a large hospital than in a small one, she does not see such a variety of cases as she does in a smaller institution where the work is good. I should say that the difference between large and small hospitals (I put hospitals of under fifty beds out of court for training purposes) is much the same as that between a public and a private school. Sound education may be obtained in both, but the former gives an indefinable something never obtained in the latter.

I am, dear Madam,

Faithfully yours,

SUPERINTENDENT.

SHOULD NURSES IN UNIFORM KISS IN PUBLIC?

To the Editor of the "British Journal of Nursing."

DEAR MADAM,—Walking down the Gray's Inn Road the other morning, I was startled to see a nurse in uniform suddenly stop on meeting a young man, put up her face to be kissed, and then turn and walk on with him. Assuming the youth to be her brother—one had no reason to suppose otherwise, and both were behaving quite quietly—is it fitting for a woman in nursing uniform to kiss men in the public streets? Personally, even if out of uniform, I should prefer to bestow any kisses I may have to give my brothers in more secluded places; but it seems to me that there is a lack of appreciation of the fitness of things on the part of a nurse who when wearing uniform shows so little restraint. It may be prudish, but I confess it appears to me that, though the question of right and wrong does not come in, the question of propriety

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)