

away. Of course, no coercion should be used by Hospital Committees, and, of course, "safety and independence" is nonsense unless we pay into the Fund nearly all our earnings, so as to get £2 a week out—which is impossible; but 10s. a week will clothe one in old age, and that is a great relief to one's mind. If a nurse can find a better way of investing her money than in the Pension Fund, by all means let her avail herself of it. But it seems to me all insurance society rates must be on a business basis, the Pension Fund as well as the rest. Anyway, let nurses save.

Yours truly,  
INFIRMARY SISTER.

#### THE COLLEGE OF NURSING.

FOR THE CHILDREN'S SAKE.

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

DEAR MADAM,—I have frequently noticed in your journal the expression of your opinion that the Matrons of workhouses should be selected from the ranks of trained nurses. All educated people having any experience of workhouses and their infirmaries must surely endorse this opinion. It seems to me to be absolutely necessary, not only in the interests of the nursing staff and the patients, but also because of the immense benefit which such a selection would confer on the inmates of workhouses generally. A careful consideration of the subject of Matronships, not of workhouses alone, but of all institutions where the physical care of others is involved, leads me to think that it would add greatly to the welfare of the race if all such Matrons had passed through a three years' training as nurses, particularly those holding posts of authority over children.

My acquaintance with industrial homes, orphanages, homes in connection with rescue work, and schools for all classes of boys and girls, has shown me the appalling amount of mischief caused by the profound ignorance in physiological matters of those who have the power to make or mar human bodies. I have been struck by the same ignorance and its evil results in the case of private governesses, and of mothers not sufficiently well off to pay for skilled care for their children. I believe the bulk of these people to be conscientious and well-meaning towards their charges; but their absolute ignorance on things physiological, their prejudices, and their extraordinarily fallacious theories thereon often completely nullify the effect of their good intentions. At present, with respect to the care of families, those usually regarded as authorities on the subject are women who have had numerous offspring and have lost several of these through lack of knowledge concerning the care of them, the remainder living to exemplify hereditary weaknesses—physical, mental, and moral—aggravated by neglect and mismanagement during childhood. Such women are described as being "very experienced."

Now, it is obvious that all having the physical control of others cannot, for many reasons, first become trained nurses, although it may be greatly desirable. Out of my consideration of this pressing need for knowledge has evolved a scheme which appears to me to be quite practical, and which would meet the requirements of the case. It is that a College of Nursing should be founded which should be analogous to our Colleges of Music and the College of Preceptors; that it should provide fully-qualified teachers of elementary physiology, domestic science,

personal hygiene, elementary psychology, toxicology, and the scientific care of young children. All these subjects might be brought within the comprehension of the average mind. The teachers could attend schools and hold classes. Local centres could be formed, examinations held, and certificates granted by the College of Nursing. With facilities for acquiring this special knowledge, I think such certificates would soon become a *sine qua non* to obtaining positions as Matrons or teachers; and the lack of the certificate would show a neglected education and unfitness for the care of others. Teaching on some of these subjects might with advantage replace or supplement that on others in the Board and Elementary schools for girls. Those women insufficiently educated to enter for the written examinations would still profit greatly through those who had entered and passed, for it is indubitable that to the lower classes example is a more weighty influence than precept.

On the subject of maternity there is urgent want of special education. I have had patients who have endangered their own lives and permanently injured the health of their children by actions which, to me, appeared sheer madness, and they have said "No one told me it would be dangerous to do so. How can I learn these things?" One cannot expect the woman of average intelligence to learn unaided from scientific works. Such books as those of Dr. Chavasse are most inadequate. Also I have heard some astonishing deductions made from the study of them. One hesitates to recommend the teaching on such points to be picked up by reading the various women's papers, because it is often fallacious, sometimes positively dangerous, and always desultory.

I can see no remedy except in a College of Nursing, and the only real difficulty concerning this is that of getting the necessary millionaire to come forward. We constantly hear of millionaires endowing scholarships and presenting free libraries in the hope of improving the state of their fellow-beings; but it does not seem to have occurred to any of them that this is, at the best, a patching-up process, and attempt to cure and strengthen the leaves and branches, while all the time the disease lies at the root. Unlimited access to the literature of the world may bring much pleasure and profit to some men, to others it will mean nothing at all; but it will add little to a man's capacity for good work in this world if he be perpetually handicapped and hampered by a digestion ruined in childhood, or some equally serious physical disability from the same cause.

To my mind the results of the dense and universal ignorance concerning pre-natal life alone are simply appalling. For instance, how many mothers know that the strength and length of life of their children's teeth are settled before birth by the quality of the enamel then formed, and that this depends greatly on the diet of the mother? The building up of the young body in childhood, for good or ill, is to a great extent dependent on the state of the teeth. Who would underestimate the value of a full set of sound teeth in maturity? It is heartbreaking to think of the many young men grinding at starvation clerkships in overcrowded England to-day, to whom the door of South Africa is closed because of their neglected and defective teeth.

I sometimes hear it urged that the world got along

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