



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 ANTI-REGISTRATION MANIFESTO.

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

DEAR MADAM,—Our Secretary has just shown me a paper protesting against the State Registration of Nurses which has been sent him to place before our Committee. With the paper is a letter asking them to pass a resolution, presumably in favour of their views, and adding, "We shall be glad to have the signature of your Matron." Is this how the signatures are obtained? The arguments used are specious, and precisely such as would appeal to a body of men who have practically no knowledge of nursing matters outside their own institution; but what shall we say for those silly, sheep-like nurses who *do* know, and yet follow their leaders because they have neither courage nor energy to stand up for their own interests? They cannot be deluded by the feeble arguments put forward by the Anti-Registration League. Has the "status" of doctors been "lowered by Registration"? No! Then why should that of nurses be lowered? And why fall foul of examinations all at once? Do they have none at the "London" or at "Westminster"? And if they do, have they found that the moral qualities of their nurses deteriorate in consequence? "Unselfish womanliness" is a most desirable quality in a nurse, but it would not avail much in nursing a case of tracheotomy unless she knew her business; nor would "manner" prevent disastrous results if she were not well up in the principles of aseptic surgery in preparing for operations.

Again, how could "utterly unsuitable women" get on to the Register? Surely they would not have been retained on the staff of a hospital for three years if they were so. And if they have been retained and certificated, why deny them the further advantage of Registration? A "notoriously bad" nurse would surely have been dismissed before the end of her training. If a "variety of nursing knowledge" is necessary "for different degrees of illness," there will always be the unregistered cottage help to fall back upon. The Anti-Registration party also state that there have been great complaints of nurses, owing to their want of moral qualities. Just so; there have been complaints galore of late years, without Registration, and there have also been cases week after week of women of the lowest class and lowest character posing as "nurses" brought before the magistrates for all kinds of ill-conduct, without Registration. Why not try what can be done to prevent these scandals *with* Registration?

I am not a member of the Matrons' Council, but my sympathies are entirely with you in your efforts for the good of nurses and nursing.—I am, dear Madam, Yours faithfully,

MATRON OF A COUNTY HOSPITAL.

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

DEAR MADAM,—The objections raised by those opposed to Registration seem to be hardly sufficient to show a reasonable explanation of the bitterness of that opposition, and, moreover, they apparently are ignorant of the effect that Registration has had on other bodies of skilled workers—not only medical men, but chemists, architects, plumbers, and others—each and all of which would testify to the general raising of these callings consequent on the necessity, first, of exertion to pass the required standard, and, second, of the increased feeling of responsibility which each member has of his own soul and of that of the body to which he belongs. The opponents describe excellent qualities in nurses which are equally desired by the advocates of Registration, but the advocates insist, in addition to this, that a minimum standard of technical knowledge must also be reached.

Matrons of nursing institutes or of small hospitals could tell woeful (when not absurd) tales of the incapable ignoramuses who now apply for responsible posts and call themselves trained nurses, and of the difficulty, often impossibility, of discovering what knowledge they have till some terrible mistake reveals the depth of their ignorance. The opponents lay much stress on the essential difference between nurse and doctor as regards Registration, whereas in reality the difference is in degree only. Medical man and nurse alike must possess both high moral qualities and technical knowledge if they are to help others in the very best way, which is what one concludes opponents and advocates both desire.

The opponents say that many who have done well in examination have failed in good work. The advocates would certainly not deny this, but they say it is equally true of other professions and trades, and yet no one dreams of saying "Do away with examinations" in those other trades and professions. The opponents say "No one would engage a governess because her name is on a register." Certainly not without knowing what that register means, but it is equally certain that no well-paid teaching posts would be given to any who had not taken their degree, and what is that but registration under another name? The opponents are very nervous as to Registration being an actual source of danger, and they picture unsuitable women by virtue of Registration being forced on the public. But, if so, the danger is equally great as regards a medical man or a chemist. The public will suffer untold woes at the hands of notoriously bad women who have been registered, or will have to spend untold gold in getting their black swan removed from the register, but we don't hear of these evils where Registration or its equivalent is established.

The contention of the opponents is that many sorts of nurses are needed to meet manifold needs, &c. This is surely "fighting a shadow," is it not? For because trained nurses should be registered it does not follow that all who attend the sick should be registered.

The objection is raised that nurses will concentrate their efforts on the attainment of technical knowledge in view of future examinations. Surely concentrated effort is the best discipline of character that can be invented, and a disciplined character will possess the power of observation, sympathy, cheerfulness, and self-control in a higher degree than one who has never made a concentrated effort. Again, the opponents say a State Register would lower the status of the best

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