



## 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 TRAINING OF PRIVATE NURSES.

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

DEAR MADAM,—I write to express my thorough appreciation of the very excellent papers you have given us lately in the NURSING JOURNAL on the training of nurses who are to undertake private nursing. I have always maintained that only the best nurses are fit for private work, and to find thoroughly conscientious and tactful ones, who are also well trained, is no easy task. Then there is the difficulty you mentioned last week, viz.—that a nurse may have three years' training in a general hospital, and yet never see a case of enteric, diphtheria, or measles. Now such cases are frequent enough in private nursing, I feel sure that there must in the future be some way in which nurses can obtain varied training, and so be fit for the onerous duties they are engaged for.

Yours faithfully,  
MARY MATHEW.

Exeter Trained Nurses' Institute.

### THE DEPRECIATION OF NURSING.

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

DEAR MADAM,—After reading your able editorial of last week, and reading the evidence of the Matron of the largest training-school in the Kingdom, before the Select Committee on Registration, one comes sadly to the conclusion that a time limit should be in force in every hospital, and excepting in but few cases women should not hold the position of Matron for a longer term than twenty years. After that term of service the great majority of women cling to obsolete ideas of training and teaching nurses, and a reactionary element throughout the institution is the result. A keen American observer of nursing politics in this country once said to me: "There is no hope for your large London nursing schools till the present generation of Matrons passes away; they are not educationalists, and can never become so; their attitude towards their subordinates is still quite feudal—absolute mistress and servant, not principal and pupil, as it should be in these days." Taking a bird's-eye view of some of London's largest hospitals, this is quite true. This type of Matron is instinctively opposed to State Registration and the organised system of training which it would introduce. Absolute in her own little sphere, she fears outside influence, otherwise interference, and this is at the bottom of the incomprehensible attitude of so many old Matrons to more liberal-minded people.

This, moreover, is the type of Matron who, highly

paid and inflated with power, for ever points the lesson of humility to her hard-worked staff. Such nurses are encouraged to despise their honourable calling by constant depreciation. No wonder the big hospitals let loose so many inferior workers. How can one do well work which is of no account? Nothing takes the heart out of the worker like depreciation, and nothing encourages us to do our very best like appreciation, and being made to realise that every detail is of value to the sick and to the community at large. All this belittling of nursing by the anti-registrationists is harmful, as it discourages women of character from taking up nursing, and is no doubt one of the reasons that the fool of the family is always considered good enough by her people for hospital work. A little more honour and a little less humility (I do not refer to the genuine modesty of the truly great) would do great good in our nurses' schools, and encourage the nurses to stand as Nature intended, upright on their feet, instead of crawling on all fours.

Yours truly,  
C. M. B.

### HOSPITAL EXPENDITURE.

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

DEAR MADAM,—I am glad to note that the President of the Nottingham General Hospital, Sir Charles Seely, to whose splendid generosity the hospital owes much, has spoken publicly of the danger of a mistake being made in the attempt to reduce the expenditure of hospitals to an irreducible medium. Let hospital authorities be as inexorable as they please on the subject of breakages of such things as thermometers, ward appliances and utensils, mugs and plates, &c.; unnecessary breakages mount up to a goodly amount in the course of a year, let them keep an eye on the over-lavish use of clean linen, where porters receive dinner and tea as part payment, let them be sure that only a liberal and not a recklessly wasteful table is kept for them, but if in their attempt to show an economical balance-sheet the patients' "extras" are cut down, or the contracts for supplies of meat, butter, eggs, &c., cheapened, the result will be disastrous to good management and good nursing.

I remember when I was a nurse in one of the large Metropolitan Training-schools how the diets varied in the different wards, and how glad I was when the surgeon or physician was fond of giving extras. Hospital tea, with no extras, is a dull meal; think of it for capricious appetites day after day. Tea, made in an urn, ready milked and sugared, and served in a mug about a quarter of an inch thick, and bread and butter. No wonder the pet of the ward, a little hip-disease child who has been there for months, "does not want any tea, thank you, nurse."

But the kindly surgeon comes round. "What do you have for tea, Dicky? What, don't care about tea? Do you like creases?" Dicky does, his eyes show it plainly. Were not creases one of the treats of his frugal home in the days gone by? "Put him on watercress, please," says the surgeon immediately, and the house surgeon writes the order on Dicky's head-board. Before the child goes to sleep he says, "Nurse, do you think they'll send up the creases to-morrow?" Nurse thinks they will, and Dicky goes to sleep with a smile on his face.

Next day, when nurse takes round the teas and stops at Dicky's bed, she says: "Creases, Dicky!"

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