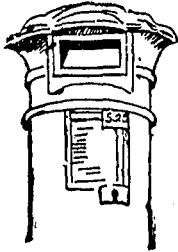


## Letters to the Editor.

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.*

### FREE TRADE IN NURSING.

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

DEAR MADAM,—Your correspondent "A Late London Hospital Sister," writing on the above subject, makes too sweeping a statement as to the overcrowding of the nursing profession.

All admit that too many poorly-qualified persons are passing out of our hospitals, but I believe the demand for first-class nurses is as large as it ever was. "There is always room at the top." I have been training nurses for eighteen years, and I can unhesitatingly assert that highly-qualified women (who can produce thoroughly satisfactory testimonials from their matrons), command easily as good posts and far better pay than they did twenty years ago.

It would surely be a sad admission for Englishwomen to have to make, that if foreigners got equal advantages with ourselves, they are too dangerous competitors for us to admit among us; and yet the tone of your correspondent's letter conveys a hint that this is not impossible.

She takes exception to the appointment of a foreigner to the matronship of a British hospital in India; does not her objection sound illogical when applied in a country where the British are not natives? As the Matron under whom the nurse in question trained, I can only say I wish that English girls with the same energy and ability would come forward for training, and their future would be as safe as that of "the foreigner."

For my own part I look upon a claim based on the accident of nationality as a very poor one. In these days it is not sufficient to rely on the reputation won years ago by a former generation of English women. We are proud of them, but their example should fire our zeal to emulate and, if possible, surpass their noble deeds. Do we quite forget what we owe as nurses to Kaiserswerth and its deaconesses when we want to shut out foreigners?

It is easy to blame "the unsympathetic attitude of many Matrons," but as a Matron I answer that all the fault does not rest with the Matrons. There are probationers who resent interference or even advice from their Matron, because they are so firmly convinced that they know better, and after some futile trials she gives up the ungrateful task of trying to improve them. Such probationers can never deserve and should not get the highest commendation at the end of their training. If English probationers gave their minds to the task of fitting themselves for higher posts and thought of their training as a preparation not only for money making but for harder

and more responsible labour, they would not have to dread foreign competition. To shut out better workers because we want to get the prizes on easier terms for ourselves is a method which does not commend itself to any honest mind.

Let the best win; let Hospital Committees seek the best and most highly qualified women for the highest posts, considering not their nationality but their personal fitness, and then let the probationers understand that neither name nor nationality is a consideration, but such a combination of natural and acquired abilities as will render them capable of undertaking tasks which even the most capable among them may find not easy.

If English girls would learn the nobility of true work and not be content just to "get through" their training they need not fear the competition of the foreigner, there is always work to be found for a good worker.

I am, Dear Madam,

Yours faithfully,

H. C. POOLE,

Matron Blackburn and East Lancashire Infirmary.

### AN UNHOLY ALLIANCE.

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

DEAR MADAM,—Can you tell me if it is the custom with a large number of private nurses, male and female, to demand or receive backsheesh from undertakers? I have heard that some receive a percentage on orders they can get for chemists, that is degrading enough, but if it is true that they also look upon undertakers as lawful plunder, then let us expose the evil in the press and try and shame them out of it. It would help us to gain the support of the public more than anything in getting the Nurses' Bill passed if we could prove to them that well-trained professionally-minded nurses, repudiate such dishonourable and mercenary behaviour, and they would soon see the necessity for having a Central Council to look into these matters and insist upon a high ethical standard for nurses.

To enter into an unholy alliance with the trades people of their patients and accept money from them as commissions is in my opinion not only dishonourable but dishonest, as we may be sure the supplier of goods is not the loser, but that the commission paid is ultimately charged by some means to the patient.

The last ten years of *laissez faire* has done untold harm in the nursing world, and swamped it with many semi-trained unscrupulous, low-typed, greedy women. Nothing can improve matters but standards of education in hospitals, and standards of ethics outside. The hospitals must test, and sift, and train the raw material, and the Central Council must lay down just and honourable laws of professional conduct, and exercise moral control outside. Honourable well-trained women working in private nursing long for such organisation. At present one quite loses heart, when invited by a pale-eyed mute, in rusty black with a dirty little leer, "to do him the honour of accepting a little trifle, may be gloves, or why not dainty shoes or—clocked socks!"

Yours truly,

A MEMBER OF THE LEAGUE OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S NURSES.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)