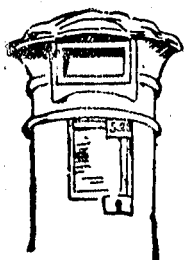


Letters to the Editor.

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.

OUR GUINEA PRIZE.

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

DEAR MADAM,—I beg to acknowledge with many thanks the receipt of your cheque for One Guinea received this morning, being the Puzzle Prize for December.—Yours truly,
ALICE STONE.
Staplefield, Crawley, January 5th, 1907.

THE TRAGEDY AND COMEDY OF WAR HOSPITALS.

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

DEAR MADAM,—It would be hard to describe the depths of gloom into which I was plunged on reading your correspondent's letter on the above subject in the BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING. How hopeless it seems to see ourselves as others see us, and the R.A.M.C. seem singularly blind in this respect!

So the orderly, I moaned to myself as I read this lady's letter, is *still* in "charge" of the ward! In what have the reforms consisted, to which I had been pinning my faith, if the Sister is not in sole and direct charge of her wards? Between despair and genuine disappointment, I asked myself what chance the poor sick soldier stood if the old régime had not been altered on the crucial point of this whole question.

Why on earth, I kept pondering, should the medical officer give his orders to the orderly, forsooth, and not to the Sister? Wasn't she yet in charge of her ward? What had the ventilation of it to do with the orderly? With these questions surging up in my poor civilian brain, I proceeded to read the melancholy confession, though unwittingly and airily touched upon by this good lady, that they (the orderlies) would have to be very hard put to, before they fail to find an excuse for their mistakes. Isn't this exactly what my book revealed, only said in fewer words, and does it not make the year's experiences I wrote down corroborate with sister X. Y. Z.'s nine years?

The gist of the whole question seems to be are our sick and wounded soldiers still going to be left in the hands of orderlies? If the fundamental clause of the Sister's authority is left out, the same muddles, confusion, neglect, appalling ignorance and colossal stupidities must again recur, with all the heart-rending consequences, in spite of all the 149 paragraphs in the world!

To console myself somewhat after finishing this letter I picked up a book of Matthew Arnold's which, though touching on another question, seemed

singularly appropriate to the point in hand. He was saying that ". . . every man should seriously understand that there is a *right* way of doing, things, and that the bliss is, without thinking of one's own self-consequence to do them in that way or to forward their being done . . . and it needed far more than has been ever yet needed of thought, study, and seriousness . . ." I would seriously suggest to your correspondent that she should enlist her sympathies on the side of these three qualifications, and not expend her energies or close her eyes to the palpable deficiencies of a system merely for the sake of defending it.

To reinstate the orderly in his old position, so that he can evade and resent an order, and "find excuses for his mistakes," at the expense of the wretched patients, it is just as sane as to re-introduce the old muzzle-loaded gun in the other part of the Service—at least, from the humane point of view, and what is *any* system, forsooth, unless it is tending towards this?

The fact of the matter is, "Sister X Y Z" is arguing for a system, and my concern is for the skilled nursing of a soldier when he is *sick*. Those who fall sick to evade their duties, or those fit only for the firing line, do not concern me. The old system certainly did admirably for them, and seemed the outcome of such methods, hence its helplessness to meet the needs of those stricken with fever, enteric and dysentery. I feel I need make no apology for this reply, but I am sure you, as well as myself, would be relieved to hear that the much-heard of reforms have not left the Army Sister on the same useless pedestal she occupied before the South African War.

I am, Dear Madam,

Very faithfully yours,
SISTER X.

THE NURSES' SOCIAL UNION.

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

DEAR MADAM,—There is, I think, some misconception as to the rôle which the Nurses' Social Union is intended to play in the nursing world.

It has no intention of entering into rivalry with Leagues, but to step in and meet a want in districts where Leagues are unable to exist. In agricultural counties, like Somerset, the villages are small and widely scattered, there is often neither the money nor the work required by the fully-trained nurse.

The consequence is that there are only five or six fully-trained nurses in a radius of ten miles. The train service and the roads (low be it spoken) of Somerset are not its most efficient features.

For instance, it takes one about three hours to get from Wells to Taunton, a distance of about thirty miles. It is easy to deduce the conclusion that meetings, run on exclusively professional lines, would not be very exhilarating. But, if those who are inclined to criticise our methods would wait to do so until they have studied our circumstances, I am sure they would acknowledge that a long and intimate acquaintance with nursing life in the country, combined with hospital training, has enabled us to evolve a scheme, which should be (and I venture

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