



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.*

WOMEN LECTURERS.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

MADAM,—In your last issue I noticed a report of a meeting held "to discuss a standard and general scheme of qualifications for lecturers and to discuss the possibility of forming a Woman Lecturers' Union, in order to maintain a high standard, and to organise lecturers into a professional body. It is well for people to meet together and debate and discuss if it amuses them to do so, but it is absurd for them to imagine that they are going to settle the organisation of a body of professional women without sanction, help, or co-operation on the part of the workers themselves.

On reading the list of names present I came to the conclusion that the meeting of such non-representative people to decide so large a question, was nothing more than a farce. Of all those present, Miss Lankester of the National Health Society was practically the only person who could speak with *locus standi* on the question from the organising point of view, and I understand that she did not consider it worth while to do so at so unrepresentative a meeting. The others really were not in a position to do so. There were two or three lecturers present out of the hundreds engaged throughout England. In fact, it would be very difficult to imagine a narrower and more restrictive little gathering than this.

As a lecturer of some standing I declare, without hesitation, that we do not intend to be "organised" by outsiders, and that a professional union, if formed, will be formed only by our own co-operation. We have not the slightest intention of allowing anyone but ourselves to fix "the minimum fee to be charged per lecture," or to decide any other questions for us. To attempt to form a Trades' Union without the assistance of the great body of workers is the most childish public step which could have been taken. We are not even impressed by the fact that a real Earl took the chair. The proper person to do so would have been a representative Woman Lecturer, whose practical knowledge and experience would have been of much value to the gathering.

Finally, we read "a committee was formed, &c." Here I maintain that no committee can be formed to organise a union, unless that committee be empowered by the Women Lecturers themselves to do so. Two or three lecturers meeting a mixed body of people cannot empower a committee to decide on such large questions as "organisations, unions, standards and minimum fees." I wonder what would be said if three factory hands met together and "formed a committee" with full power to decide the great and vexed labour questions of the day!

The whole thing is so palpably ridiculous that further comment seems quite unnecessary. A body of school girls even would resent such an attempt to interfere with the liberties and free rights of the individual.

Sincerely yours,

AN INDEPENDENT WOMAN LECTURER.

HOSPITAL ENGAGEMENTS.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

MADAM,—I am that somewhat looked down upon person "a pro." But I have identified myself even in my short career with professional interests, and I have a high estimate

of our honourable work. Therefore I venture to enter the lists and join in the correspondence on Hospital Engagements. To begin with, I deprecate as degrading the idea which obtains, both in and out of Hospital, that there can be no association between men and women other than that of a romantic character. We "new women" must show that women and men can be friends in the best sense of the word. Since I have been in Hospital I have been disgusted with the amount of *gossip* which goes on in the wards, and it is this gossip which converts the relations between the Nurses and the students or medical staff into vulgar sentimentality. If a student or a house-surgeon speaks for two minutes to a Nurse, the incident is noted on all hands and an amount of vulgar "chaff" follows which puts the Nurse in a very uncomfortable position. Why can we not recognise that a perfectly dignified, friendly attitude may be possible between the nursing and medical staffs without any suggestion of consequences in the form of flirtations or engagements?

It certainly gives the patients a very lowered estimation of Nurses when they hear, as they frequently do, the chaffing remarks which are made by one member of the staff to another on the "attentions" of certain young men connected professionally with the ward.

And I have often heard the wardmaids discussing with the Nurses the probable "outcome" of the attentions paid by a house-surgeon to a Sister or a Staff Nurse. And I say it is degrading. There is no reason why cordial, friendly relations should not be maintained between the medicos and the nursing staff, and if this friendship should result in an engagement, there is no possible argument against it, so long as the conduct of both is dignified and well-bred. The happiest marriages are based on friendship. And I think that one gets to know a man or a woman much better in their work, and one learns the best or worst points in their character in a way that is impossible under social and society conditions.

A PROGRESSIVE PRO.

REST.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

MADAM,—I should like to express that I quite concur in the view taken by "Tired Worker" as to the necessity for more frequent holidays for Nurses. From my own experience I believe that what is called the "hardening effect of Hospital" is entirely owing to over-tire. It is an absolute impossibility to give the deep-hearted sympathy one ought to give to one's patients when every bone and muscle and nerve of one's body is in a chronic condition of ache.

To a student of faces it is horrible to see the change a few years of Hospital work makes in the appearance of all but the strongest women. One sees a fresh young probationer enter Hospital with enthusiasm and energy and absence of care. After a few months she gets anæmic, neurotic, and often extremely irritable with her patients. After three or four years she is an absolutely different woman. If her character has not hardened, she is frequently an exhausted woman. If of a sympathetic nature her fate is worse. I do wish people would realise what an enormous strain it is on one's vitality to be constantly giving out sympathy. So many patients are hungering and craving for vitality, and it is a most exhausting thing, apart from the mental and physical strain of nursing, to be in constant attendance on such cases, sapping as they do one's very life currents.

I do not agree with "Tired Worker" that a rest every six months would solve the difficulty. The only humane solution is an eight hours day. And there will be no difficulty about this when the training part of a Nurse's life will be paid for just as a High School or College Course has to be paid for.

The fourteen-hour system is just a treadmill which grinds out the health, the happiness, and the lives of our Hospital Nurses.

ANOTHER TIRED WOMAN.

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