



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 NURSES' LIBRARY.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

MADAM,—As a Nurse with "the thirst for good books" already created, let me express my appreciation of the efforts which you and some other Nurses and Matrons are making on behalf of a Nurses' library. As a private Nurse I am struck with the small amount, and the poor quality of literature to be found even in the houses of very well-to-do people. In a country rectory, where I have recently had charge of a long case, my choice in literature was bounded on the one hand by the Bible and Pilgrim's Progress—these representing the serious side—while fiction figured in the Wide, Wide World, one or two of Miss Austin's works, and two copies of Dickens', which I have read and re-read a score of times.

I find very often where "library books" are taken, people have no books of their own and the subscription to Mudie's or Smith's does not generally much benefit the Nurse in the household, especially in London, or towns where the books are so frequently changed. Scores of times when I have been just in the middle of an interesting volume, I have had to give it up because my patient's friends "were sending to the library to change the books."

In many households when I am literally hungering for a mental meal, I have Frances Ridley Havergal's books put into my hand, or a good-natured member of the family comes up and says, "Here, Nurse, is a nice light book—not too much thinking in it," and I am handed a story by Miss Braddon, Annie Swan, or John Strange Winter. Now these are nice enough books in their way, but I want some literature in my novel. Would it not be a good idea to ask some of your readers to send up a list of books which would be suitable for the proposed Nurses' library, somewhat after the plan of "Lubbock's hundred books"? I, as representing a Nurse in private practice, am congratulating myself a dozen times a day on the prospect of a real library of our own, and all for the modest sum of four shillings a year, and I am looking forward with much enjoyment to the time when I can pack up with my caps and aprons and "kit" one or two good books of my own selection, so that I shall not be dependent on the stray and often most untempting volumes on which at present I have to depend when I "take a case" amongst people who say "they have no time for reading."

Sincerely yours,
"A NURSE WHO READS."

[We think the idea of our correspondent admirable, and invite our readers to send us a list of fifty books which they would prefer bought first with contributions already in hand for the purpose of starting the Nurses' Library.—ED.]

NURSES AS COMMERCIAL TRAVELLERS.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

MADAM,—I am very glad you are taking up this question in the pages of the NURSING RECORD. I have been more or less of an invalid for some years past, and have served an apprenticeship, so to speak, "to all sorts and conditions of Nurses." Among them I have come across two specimens

of the genus commercial traveller, and frankly, it is the kind I dislike most.

One of this variety was somewhat reticent and retiring—perhaps the business was a little new to her—so that I had not much difficulty in repressing her commercial ambitions by refusing to purchase from her any part of the stock-in-trade, on which it was evident, from her anxiety to dispose of the various articles comprised in it, she received a percentage.

But the other type was perfectly irrepressible, and was evidently a practised "bagman." The instincts of the hawk had evidently been cultivated by long use, and her instinct to detect a possible need on my part for some article in her stock-in-trade was remarkably keen.

Had I a headache, she would at once produce some cone or tablet with which to cool my forehead (price 3s. 6d.). Further, "there was a particular cologne which took away headache like magic" (3s. a bottle). Also she had some smelling salts which prevented the recurrence of head-ache.

When I complained of the noise occasioned by the cleansing of my room, she at once offered to go out and purchase a "noiseless carpet sweeper," and she could recommend a particular make of soft slippers for my housemaid.

She obligingly offered my husband a tube of some particular shaving cream and a packet of dusting powder with which to make his morning toilet and the use of his razor somewhat more agreeable to his feelings, and all these things were produced from a tin box which she brought with her.

One of my sons was going on a sea voyage. The invaluable Nurse had at hand some wonderful "anti sea-sickness" remedy, vended at a somewhat large price. During convalescence, when I was able for a time to dispense with my night-gown and to adopt a more becoming costume, my ferile Nurse at once suggested a particular make of corset which would "improve my figure and at the same time allow me to lie down with comfort." She had also at hand some stocking suspenders, which she recommended on the plea that "garters caused varicose veins;" and various pillows and "invalid comforts" were also to the fore. Dressings and applications for my alas! too thin hair were constantly being brought under my notice, toilet powders, ointments, lip-salves, mouth washes and disinfectants were always being proffered, and by no means "at Store prices."

Now, Madam, I quite appreciate that some of these toilet requisites are delightful and necessary, and I must allow that my Nurse showed excellent discrimination in the choice she made of fragrant scents and delightful tooth-powders. And of course an invalid is very glad to hear of a new preparation of such things that will prove refreshing and pleasant. But it creates a very unpleasant relation between a patient and a sick Nurse when she knows that the latter is always on the *qui vive* to forestall her wishes—not out of sympathy and kindness—but as a question of 25 per cent. profits.

Now I do not suggest for one moment that Nurses of this kind are common. Indeed, until my own experience arose I had never heard such a thing hinted at. And I should have hesitated to send you a list of my grievances had it not been for the high estimate I have formed from some of my Nurses. And the high view I take of the Nursing profession prompts me to add my small testimony in the hope that this tendency to traffic with the sick—who are so much at the mercy of their Nurses—can be crushed in its infancy.

A DISGUSTED PATIENT.

The Editor has to thank a very large number of readers for their kind letters received this week, and which she deeply appreciates. She is undertaking new and important public work, and is extremely busy, therefore, at present. But she hopes to personally write and thank her many kind correspondents for their expressions of sympathy and confidence, and trusts they will excuse her, if, under the circumstances, her acknowledgments are delayed.

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