



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 MENTAL NURSE QUESTION.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM,—Since you have opened your columns to free speech from the Nurses, may I be allowed to enter my protest against the placing of Lunatic Attendants upon the Register of Trained Nurses.

When I registered I understood that the enrolment on the Royal British Nurses' Association was only open to those Nurses who had had general training, and who had spent three years within the wards of a Hospital. I have yet to learn that three years passed in a Lunatic Asylum is equivalent to general training. If that is so, I wonder why we spend years of study and hard work to fit us for the responsible duties of the care of the sick, and the carrying out of the doctor's orders intelligently, if untrained Asylum Attendants can with one bound obtain the status for which we have worked so hard. I am not one of the aggressive or turbulent ones, but at the same time decline to act like a sheep. But since those members who founded and knew the whole history of the Association, and who managed these matters for us, have been deprived of their seats, we must indeed follow the advice of Epicurus, and "think for ourselves." It is quite time that we should have a voice in matters which so nearly concern our interests, and I deeply regret being unable to attend the meeting which Miss Wingfield proposes, but shall await the outcome of it with the greatest interest. I had always understood that the Register was a criterion of Trained Nurses, and that the Royal British Nurses' Association badge was the "hall mark" of a fully-trained Nurse. Clearly we must divest ourselves of such *erroneous* ideas. I have also yet to learn that the privilege of Registration is to be bought, and not worked for. If it is a last despairing effort to cover expenses, could not the funds be raised in some way other than by lowering the standard of the Register? And is it not possible for the expenses to be kept within the income of the Association. Is this too much to expect? I have nothing to say against the Asylum Attendants being registered if they wish it, but it should be on a Register for Mental Attendants, and *not* that of Trained Nurses. It would not be fair to the Nurses or to the public.

I think we owe a duty to the public as well as to ourselves, and therefore I venture to offer my humble opinion. I must apologise for taking up so much of your time and space.

I remain, dear Madam,

Yours faithfully,

SISTER HAWES, M.R.B.N.A.

Glasgow.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM,—In the present correspondence concerning bestowing the "status" of the Trained Nurse on Asylum Attendants; the primary and vital danger has not been made sufficiently clear by your correspondents. How comes it that such an all-important question to the members of the Royal British Nurses' Association can be practically arranged without the members of the Association being consulted. This is our great danger, and one which it behoves us to look straight in the face and grapple with. How are we situated at present? In truth we are bound hand and foot, and, deny it as they choose in the *Nurses' Journal*, we are effectually gagged, unless we take the extreme measure advocated by Miss Wingfield, and call a Public Meeting to discuss our own affairs. I am a member of the General Council and have attended many of its meetings, and say without fear of contradiction (I have too many witnesses) that the chairmanship of Sir James Crichton-Brown, hotly partisan and unjust as it has become, is a public scandal and a common danger. Is it likely that Nurse members of that Council will risk public insult from the Chair by protesting against pre-arranged and ill-considered schemes? In the past, matters were bad enough, but the constitution of the new Council is a disgrace! Nominated, and cut and dried in the office, accepted by an Executive Committee composed largely of "amenable persons," the name of every medical man and Matron who has the courage of their opinions has been removed. Not one of our leading London Hospital Matrons, with the exception of Miss Thorold, vice-chairman (a warm supporter of the fatal official autocracy) remains on the list; and last, but not least, the Nurses' list has been packed with members of the Middlesex Hospital and Chelsea Infirmary Nursing Staffs. No one can watch the voting of this clique without becoming aware of its partisan policy, led as it is by the thumping of the proverbial emblem of Gampism, the sturdy umbrella of a Matron too well known to mention by name. I have sat close to this lady at the Annual Meeting and on other occasions, and more unseemly conduct in a Matron it would be difficult to find. Bursts of hissing, thumping, clapping, and out-spoken opprobrious remarks concerning our founders. How long is it possible that such conduct will be condoned by unbiassed members of our Association? Again, the character of our Council has been entirely altered. All our *ex-officio* Matrons—that is, ladies who were independent of nomination by the Hon. Officers—have been removed, leaving something like forty *ex-officio* medical members, who can at any time when commanded come up and swamp the voting, and if this was not enough, we know that, as Middlesex Hospital is a stone's throw from our offices, that contingent can come up and vote with little difficulty, when members from a distance cannot possibly attend.

Then how about our present Executive Committee. The new members chosen, especially the majority of the medical members, have come up in the past over and over again to vote with the officials, and have openly supported the unjust ruling from the Chair.

And now our Registration Board, a Board which in the past gave seats to *ex-officio* members, who therefore again were independent of the nominating of the Hon. Officers, by the action of Mr. Fardon, Medical Secretary, has been made entirely elective, or in other

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