



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.

SUPPRESSED.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM,—I regret that I did not retain a copy of my letter addressed to the Members of the Royal British Nurses' Association, but as you give the opportunity of stating the fact, I should be glad to let it be known that it was to the following effect:—I objected in the strongest terms to the New Bye-Laws, because (a) they perpetuate a breach of faith to those Matrons who were practically promised a seat as *ex-officio* members of the Executive, among whom I specially mentioned yourself; (b) Because they also render it possible for the present Executive Committee to re-nominate year after year the same Honorary Officers, thereby continuing a misconduct, as we believe, of the affairs of the Association; (c) Because the Bye-Law referring to the election of the General Council is so vague that, with the mistrust bred from experience, we fear this Executive Committee may be preparing to deprive us country Members of the very small amount of power which the present mode of election by voting paper leaves us.

We have good reasons (I speak from experience) to mistrust the present Executive, who have treated the opposing minority with the minimum of courtesy and even justice, and who have, as I stated in my letter, entirely failed to carry out the objects for which the Charter was given. The manner in which our protests were thrown aside as worthless, is merely another proof of the high-handed government to be expected if these Bye-Laws can be forced through the last stages. I trust, however, that our protests will meet with more courteous treatment at the hands of the Privy Council.

I am, Madam,

Yours faithfully,

HENRIETTA C. POOLE, M.R.B.N.A.

Matron, East Lancashire Infirmary, Blackburn.
December 28th, 1897.

MAXIMUM WORK FOR MINIMUM WAGE.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM,—As a member of certain Hospital Committees I have endeavoured for some years to effect the reduction of the working hours and the increase of wages of our Nurses.

There are two classes of employers existing at the present time which probably have existed since the world began. One class expects the *maximum amount of work* from the employed for the *minimum amount of*

wages, whereas the other class considers it right to give a *fair wage for a fair amount of work*.

Unfortunately most of our Hospital Committees and Matrons and owners of Private Nursing Homes belong to the former class.

I hear good reports from Guy's, King's, and Moorfields Ophthalmic, and from two or three Private Nursing Homes, but, in the majority of Hospitals and Homes, the Nurses' hours on duty are far too long, and their pay far too small, and Public opinion alone can remedy these evils.

One Matron, whose night Nurses are twelve hours on duty, and only get seven hours in bed and £10 per annum in wages, informed me that she knew her nurses were overworked, but that when a young woman became a Nurse she must expect to have to sacrifice her health for the good of her patients.

Now to ruin the health of a young woman to benefit the health of another person would be in my opinion very wrong indeed. Health is a precious gift from the Creator, and whoever knowingly helps to injure the health of another, will probably have to answer for it hereafter.

Another Matron who does not allow her nurse to sit down if unoccupied in the wards, informed me that she looked on her nurses as soldiers on duty, and seemed surprised when I told her that soldiers on duty were relieved every two hours, and that a commanding officer's first care was the *health* of the men under his command. Moreover, no soldier is allowed to be on night duty for more than one night in every four or five.

The owner of a Nursing Home not far from Harley Street, which has eight or ten patients' rooms, employs no Night Nurse at all, and her two Nurses are on duty both day and night. For this one receives £10 a year, and the other nothing.

Such people as those I have mentioned are not fit to have the charge of young women, and the blame must rest on the Committees who appoint such Matrons, and the doctors and public who support such Nursing Homes.

Several cases have come to my notice of young Nurses who have had their health destroyed by the long hours and continuous night duty; and the newspapers have published particulars of two cases in which Nurses have actually died from overwork, and probably there are other cases which have not appeared in the papers.

As your journal is about the only publication which can be called a true friend of the Nursing profession, it would be of immense assistance to the attainment of a fair wage for a fair amount of work, for Nurses, if you would kindly publish the hours of work and recreation observed at all the different Hospitals and principal Nursing Homes, so that Nurses and Probationers may know where *not* to go, and the doctors may learn where *not* to send their patients, and the public may ascertain where *not* to send their subscriptions.

In conclusion, I trust the time is not far distant when nine hours will be the maximum time for Nurses to be on duty throughout the United Kingdom; when two years will be the maximum time a Probationer will be expected to serve before she is given a Certificate; when young women will be allowed to become Probationers on attaining the age of twenty-one; when the minimum wage for a probationer will be £20, for a Nurse £30, for a Sister £40, and for a Matron £50; and when the motto of all our Hospitals and all the

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