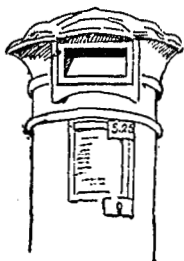


Letters to the Editor.

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.*

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE LIVES OF THE PATIENTS AT CHELSEA INFIRMARY?

*To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."*

MADAM,—May I be allowed to call your attention to a case before the Chelsea Board of Guardians on Wednesday 26th inst., in connection with an operation at our Infirmary?

On May 24th, a man aged 44 was operated on by his own desire, for hernia. There were certain complications which made the case a very grave one. The operation was successfully performed and the man doing well.

The Matron of the Hospital, on the 5th of June, altered the position of the patient by placing a pillow under his back, without instruction from the surgeon, and in spite of the nurse in charge, with the result that the wound was opened, and serious hæmorrhage occurred; the patient's life being endangered. Now Madam, the reason I appeal to you is, that as a Guardian of the Poor I feel that if the discipline of our Infirmary is to be violated like this by the head of the nursing staff, my position is a farce.

Five at the Board voted for a Local Government Board enquiry, the majority of ten persons altogether failing to perceive our grave responsibility in the matter towards the poor sick persons committed to our charge.

The defence is that if bed sores occur, the head of the nursing department is blamed. Surely nothing could be weaker; for, as I understand it, in surgical cases *no* person instructed in the art of surgical nursing would have taken the responsibility of altering the position of a patient after an operation of such gravity without definite instruction from the surgeon in charge; especially as he had previously given his definite instructions to the nurse in charge. Therefore we are in the position of such ordinary discipline not being observed in our infirmary.

I have mentioned the case of the Guardians. The operating surgeon is a young man, and a very grave injustice would have been done him, had the patient died. No human being could possibly have asserted that this interference was the sole cause of death, and a young man who has justly earned great praise, might have been severely blamed. The fact is, we are none of us safe in such a position.

Mr. Horne, the operator, on learning what had been done, expostulated with the Matron, with no effect, and then told Dr. Moore, the Superintendent, that he could not take any responsibility further in the case. But that would have been obviously useless had the patient succumbed.

I am of opinion that the nursing profession is likely to be greatly injured in the eyes of the medical profession, and before the world, by such proceedings.

Yours faithfully,

July 31st, 1899. FLORENCE GROVE, P.L.G.

[We have referred to this matter in our Editorial article this week.—Ed.]

"SMASHING-UP THE MATRONS."

*To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."*

DEAR MADAM.—I got the *Scalpel* and read the whole article which you reviewed last week, and naturally (being a Matron) feel very indignant that such an article should appear in a medical paper, and, moreover, in a paper edited by a doctor, who in times past has shown himself so interested in the progress of nursing. It is written, of course, by a partisan, and therefore carries but little weight or influence. At the same time, to be quite just, is there not some reason for these skits on hospital Matrons? Are we quite sure that they are absolutely without a shred of foundation? I am not so sure. It is only a few years ago since a scathing criticism of a hospital Matron appeared in the NURSING RECORD in some of the most brilliant papers which have ever been printed in its columns, under the title of "Letters from Life," and the description therein given of the Matron in her "Holy of Holies" is strangely like that to which "Kathleen" alludes, and which you quote. Are we so sure that this type of potentate has entirely disappeared?

I only wish "Kathleen's" skit on the Matron of St. Agatha's who lived the "higher life" had more truth in it. I infinitely prefer this public-spirited person to Mr. Holland's inert dames, suffering from a very prevalent disease, which he has wittily diagnosed as "Matron's Chronic." But it is in the happy mean that we shall find salvation; it is useless for the medical press to attempt to prevent the evolution of the trained nurse; she is science's product, and the skill of the modern medicine man has given her birth. What a pity professional jealousy should prevent the father profession dealing in a truly generous and paternal spirit with his brilliant little daughter—Nursing—he can't get on without her.

"YORKSHIRE."

PUBLIC PRIZE GIVING.

*To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."*

DEAR MADAM,—I read with interest your account of the opening of the new buildings at the London Hospital, and of the public presentation of prizes and certificates to nursing probationers. It seems a pity that this course is not more universally adopted. We seldom hear, in this country, of a public distribution of certificates to nurses. On the other side of the Atlantic, they do things much better. Surely it is more appropriate that nurses should publicly receive their certificates, and that so important an epoch should be appropriately marked by their training school as a day to be remembered.

I am, Dear Madam,

Yours truly,  
PROGRESSIVE.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)