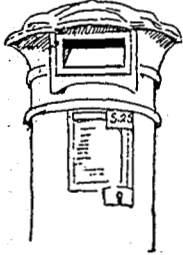


Letters to the Editor.

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.

LEST WE FORGET.

Remember July 4th, 1776.

To the Editor of the "Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM,—In face of an unwarranted attack by the *Hospital*, your timely assistance in commenting upon and reprinting my letter, together with your statements of facts concerning the treatment of New Zealand Nurses, in connection with the South African War, came as a welcome gleam of light from out the surrounding darkness of misrepresentation and mismanagement. To receive such consideration from strangers so far distant is to feel that the brotherhood of man so beautifully expressed by Scotland's national poet, Robert Burns, is not an altogether impossible thing. We, the Brigade, tender you our sincere and heartfelt thanks. When nurses from all over New Zealand offered their services for South Africa the following answer was returned: "The Imperial authorities are providing all medical care." It was felt, however, that some of our own women should go out with the contingents. Therefore a few of the wealthier individuals subscribed and sent out six nurses, but they were not allowed to leave here until their passage money, together with keep and salary in S. Africa had been guaranteed. The only nurse leaving Auckland paid her own expenses and gave her services free in S. Africa. How the Imperial Authorities provided all care has been shown to their eternal disgrace. Such a breach of faith, on their part stands almost unparalleled in the annals of English history. Unparalleled inasmuch as the nature of the war which for a time did "stagger humanity" was such that it became imperative for Britain's honor that the colonies should come to her assistance, and the men who went forth from all quarters of the globe, who went forth in all good faith in Imperial promises, returned to tell a tale that has dimmed our vision of England's glory and razed to the ground our bulwark of faith in England's honor.

I notice in the *New Zealand Herald* of the 25th inst. that the Hospitals Commission of Inquiry returned a verdict which was only to be expected. The Commission was appointed by the War Office. Was it likely that it—the Commission—would bring forward any evidence of mismanagement that would inculpate the Government? In the face of what was honestly a cruel scandal it became necessary to state something, and that something amounted to "serious laches." But this veiled verdict does not detract one iota from the serious breach of faith committed, nor lessen the gravity of the situation: for if the Imperial authorities had intended to have acted honestly they would have manned the Commission of Inquiry with

unbiased men from each of the Colonies represented. But there it is—we are hedged round with moral cowardice, and are too tardy of spirit to strike out for any reform. We, the people, are to blame.

Again thanking you,

I am, dear Madam,

Sincerely yours,

(Mrs.) EMILY NICOL,
Sec. R.C.B.

Red Cross Brigade,

Ponsonby, Auckland, N.Z.

January 28th, 1901.

NURSES, "MIDWIVES," AND CERTIFIED MONTHLY NURSES.

To the Editor of the "Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM,—In his letter in your last issue, Mr. Colin Campbell writes of the "Midwife" and "Monthly Nurse" question as it touches the public and the nursing profession. I should like to point out that the present system of training is equally injurious to many would-be conscientious nurses. I know nothing of lecture-trained nurses, but the fact that there are in London alone many lying-in hospitals which undertake to grant certificates to "midwives" and "monthly nurses" at the end of a few weeks' training, that the committee, medical staff, and matron of such hospitals all endorse this system is, in my opinion, a most forcible reason for State registration which will necessitate a three years' training.

Knowing how widely your paper is read by the public, and how little it understands the question of maternity nursing, or the training for it, if it is not trespassing too far on your valuable space, I should like to state my own experience, which I feel sure must also fit the experience of many other maternity nurses, and must continue to do so as long as the present system of training prevails.

A few years since it became necessary for me to acquire some means of earning my living. A married friend, who thought me fitted for such work, suggested maternity nursing, as a friend who had been at Cheltenham College with her had taken it up with great success. I knew *absolutely nothing* of nurses or nursing. I had met several nurses socially, but they were in *mufti*, and of course nursing was not discussed. I decided to go through the necessary training, selected a well-known lying-in hospital, had an interview with the Matron, and was finally admitted. I spent nearly a year there, so had ample opportunity to study the first phase of the system which turns out yearly hundreds of "midwives" and "monthly nurses" on an unsuspecting public. These would-be nurses represented almost every grade of the lower classes, and every degree of lack of education, and one woman, I remember, could not write! Personally I found many to be dishonest, untruthful, indescribably dirty in their habits and persons, utterly unprincipled, shockingly coarse, of deficient intelligence, and with not the faintest idea of discipline. Most of them were *hopelessly* ignorant, because they had passed the age when ignorance can be remedied. A small proportion had received a little education; a still smaller proportion had had general training previously, and these generally spoke of maternity nursing as if it were *infra dig*; some were in similar circumstances to my own. My health suffered generally through the extremely bad feeding,

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