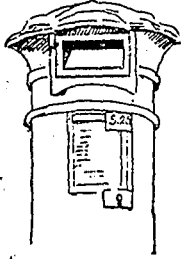


Letters to the Editor.

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 ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION AND THE MIDWIVES' QUESTION.

To the Editor of the "Nursing Record."

1, Shrewsbury Road,
Bayswater, W.

July 9th, 1901.

DEAR MADAM,—Knowing the deep interest you take in nursing matters, and as I see by the NURSING RECORD that you have taken a decisive line in the interest of the nurses on the question of a footnote being placed on each page of the List of Members of the R.B.N.A. who have taken up Midwifery as a special subject, and whose names are placed in a special list, I beg to enclose copies of letters which I have sent to the Secretary of the R.B.N.A., to be placed before the Executive committee, saying I object to such a proceeding. A perusal of the letters and Miss Leigh's reply will give you and many of my colleagues my views on the subject.

I am, dear Madam, yours sincerely,

GEORGINA B. MACVITIE,

M.R.B.N.A.

[COPY.]

To Miss Leigh, Secretary, Royal British Nurses' Association.

DEAR MISS LEIGH,—In the *British Medical Journal* is a report from the Medical Defence Union objecting to the terms "qualifying" and "diploma" being used in connection with a list of nurse members published by the Royal British Nurses' Association, who have obtained certificates qualifying them to act as midwives, as objectionable, that in consequence the association recognises that they have made "a clerical error," and are consequently going to append on each page a footnote that these certificates were simply for the training of nurses, and not diplomas qualifying for the practice of midwives.

I consider this act is likely to injure those nurses who hold a diploma from the London Obstetrical Society distinctly saying that the holder is a "skilled midwife and competent to attend cases of natural labour." Now, a footnote from the R.B.N.A. is in my opinion detrimental to them in midwifery practice. I am one who holds the diploma, and such a list finding its way abroad would certainly be damaging to me.

In obstetric work there are two kinds of workers. The one who has studied so as to enable her to deliver the woman to whom she may be called to attend should it be a case of natural labour. The other is simply a monthly nurse. She receives a certificate from the hospital where she has trained, and takes charge of the mother and infant after childbirth—their period of training is for two months, whereas the midwife is there for three months; her services are

employed for district work, while in the lying-in hospital. She is sent alone and only sends for the medical officer if necessary. Those on the other hand who take up monthly work alone are never sent out.

I therefore object to the footnote being appended.

There are many nurses on your list of midwives who have never had any other training than the three months in the Lying-in Hospital, so that I do not see how the Association can vouch for their being good nurses. Of course, as time goes on they get practical experience; but they have not passed through a general hospital training; those who have should only be deemed worthy of being members of the R.B.N.A. In which case there would be no reason for publishing a separate list on the roll of members. In my opinion, for the good of general trained nurses, who have also qualified specially for obstetrical work, it would be wiser to do away with the separate list altogether, and then we should be doing justice to those who are real nurses in every sense of the word.

This alteration must be an additional expense; it worked formerly very well. If you must have this superfluous list, then I think there should be one, totally separate, showing the general trained nurse with (L.O.S.) certificate, as apart from those who only hold the latter. It is only of very recent years that the London Obstetrical Society have given up the "Diplomas." I think from 1895.

It is a pity that the midwife does not get a much longer period of training, and be taught the management of "difficult labour," also how to use the forceps when necessary.

In Calcutta, nurses after two years' training at the General Hospital, and at the Medical College Hospital, if they wish it, go in for a third year at the Eden Hospital for Lying-in work, where they receive a much better training than we get at home.

I do not mean by this that nurses are to supersede doctors. On the contrary they become more helpful to the medical profession, for no good nurse will try to take his place.

Nurses are now working so much in foreign lands, in India, China, etc., where it is very difficult to get a doctor at times—it seems but right that they should have a better knowledge of their work. They are often sent to places where they are so far from a doctor that many valuable lives, which are now lost, would have a better chance of being saved.

I am writing simply from the nursing point of view, and I am sure I am advocating the opinion of many.

I hope you will bring this before the Executive Committee, as regards the foot-note respecting midwives, and that our Association will also uphold a longer and better training of them in the future. It seems instead of raising our standard of nurses, we are being lowered in the eyes of the public.

Yours truly,
GEORGINA B. MACVITIE,
M.R.B.N.A.

[COPY.]

Royal British Nurses' Association,
10, Orchard Street,
Oxford Street,
London, W.

July 5th, 1901.

DEAR MISS MACVITIE.—Many thanks for your letter of the 4th inst., which I have read with great interest.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)