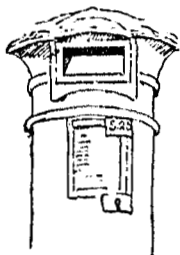


**Letters to the Editor**

NOTES, QUERIES. &amp;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 PERSONALITY OF THE PRIVATE NURSE.**

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

DEAR MADAM,—In Miss Lillian Morris's remarks on the personality of a nurse, which you quote in the NURSING RECORD, I see she refers to the fact that many people, though quite satisfied with the excellent care and skill of a nurse, often say "she is not the sort of person I should care to have again." Miss Morris accounts for this by the nurse being blameworthy in many cases, but she does not attempt to explain the cases where the nurse is *not* to blame. This is a problem which faces everyone engaged in private nursing, particularly the best class of nurses. In the republican life of a hospital one is spared that and many other difficulties which beset the private nurse, difficulties which really arise through the inability of the public and the nurses to discriminate between the professional and the social in their mutual relations. To my mind, the whole matter hinges on the point as to whether private nursing is a profession, or a domestic occupation. Obviously many people regard it as the latter. If it be a profession why do not all private nurses do their utmost to make the public understand this; and *why do they not live up to the tone of professional women*, both at their cases and in their private lives? So many nurses adopt the tone of the lady's maid, or that of the village "Gamp."

It is the commonest thing for patients, who happen to like a nurse, to assume that she will be willing and pleased to become a friend. Yet who, having had professional relations with a doctor, lawyer, or architect would presume that such would be ready to enter into personal and social relations also with every client? I am convinced that to this inconsistent attitude on the part of the public towards the profession of trained nursing most of the dissatisfaction and difficulty on the subject is due.

To speak from my own experience, which, I am sure, covers that of many nurses, I have nursed private cases of every social grade between the aristocrat and the artisan. With very few exceptions, all my patients, and many of their relatives decided to retain their acquaintance with me on personal lines, apparently without a doubt as to my readiness to respond, and spoke of future meetings and correspondence. Now, apart from the fact that in my private life I am rarely socially inclined, and that on the occasions when I may be I am extremely fastidious, to a busy woman with multifarious interests, it is really embarrassing to be offered dozens of unsuitable friendships, so to speak, and to know that unless they are accepted dire offence will be given, and one will never again be required as nurse to the families concerned. On this very point I have, unfortunately, alienated many people, usually those

of inferior breeding. They wrote after I left them in an intimate strain, which I could never use in return, and my reserved replies generally ended the episode. I hate to hurt people, but it was inevitable. In a house of sickness and anxiety I am in my element. I love to give the help and comfort which a nurse can under such circumstances, and, as I have knocked about the world a great deal, I am adaptable to most ways of living. But directly the people are well and happy once more, the majority of them bore me intensely, and I seldom wish to see them again. Only the other day I heard of an aristocratic lady graciously inviting a nurse to go and see her frequently when she comes up to town, though all the time the nurse was in her house she was treated in every way as a domestic servant. The nurse in question thanked her pleasantly, but explained that she was afraid her friends and her work would not allow her the necessary leisure. I should have said the same. One must keep some self-respect. But it is certain that lady will never employ the nurse again. I know that the difficulty of "pleasing the friends," and at the same doing their duty to the patient is a positive nightmare to many nurses, especially to those who have to face the displeasure of authorities when they fail in this respect. In fact, many nurses abandon the attempt to do both, and set themselves strenuously to "please the friends," even when this entails neglect of the patient. I have seen far more gratitude bestowed on the fussy, talkative nurse, who lets the patient die, and pleases the relatives by her effusive sympathy and her wish to remain until the funeral is over, than is usually given to the quiet, conscientious nurse, who so often during the terrible hours of early morning, draws a patient away from the very brink of the dark river and says nothing about it, except to the doctor, fearing to deepen the distress of anxious relatives.

In my opinion the difficulties in private nursing are enormous, and they call for far more *savoir faire* than the average woman possesses. I also think that the grievances on the subject will never be settled until the practical and sentimental attitude of the public towards private nurses undergoes reformation. How inconsiderate, often actually inhuman, the public can be to the nurses it employs only those who have been for years in the work can understand.

Lack of sleep and pure air, insufficient nourishment, the strain of mastering the intricacies of family politics—often presented from many different points of view—the drain on the vitality through one's sympathies, all in addition to an anxious case, are sufficient to unbalance the judgment of even the wisest head ever borne by a nurse. Indeed, though I still keep my ideal and strive and urge others towards it, I long ago decided that only a goddess could adequately fill the position, and come successfully through all the complications, difficulties, and temptations—for an attractive woman meets many temptations—of a private nurse.

I am, dear Madam,  
Yours faithfully,  
THEOREM.

**A SAVING OF LABOUR.**

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

DEAR MADAM.—Now that the subject of spring cleaning again faces domestic rulers, I think the result of my experiments with Sapon may interest some of

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