



## 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.*

### SURFACE NURSING.

*To the Editor of the "British Journal of Nursing."*

DEAR MADAM,—I should like to say how pleased I have been to read the two letters that have lately appeared in your columns on "surface nursing," and that I heartily endorse the sentiments of the writers of them.

I have never heard of nurses in private cases objecting to do anything for their patients' good or comfort, having had but little experience in private nursing.

But it is indeed grievous to hear of their saying that such and such things "are not their work," and it sounds rather as if it came from under-bred or badly-trained servants.

I can only think that it proceeds from nurses of a very low stamp, and it is possible that those drawn from poor and rough surroundings have no conception of all the niceties of the toilet of ladies of a higher class, nor how the neglect of many (to them small and superfluous) attentions may be a matter of course with the patient, and the omission of them, especially when ill and unable to perform them for themselves, a matter of irritation and trial to invalids.

Surely it would be better to do a good deal more than is absolutely necessary, rather than to leave undone anything, however small, for the patient's good or comfort.

How truly absurd it is for such nurses, who can have little or no dignity, to try and stand upon it by objecting to this and that which they ought to do, whereas, if they could only realise it, they might enhance that little by carefully discharging all that comes to their hand to the very best of their ability.

The introduction of more nurses of gentle birth (as recommended by the writer of the first letter) and higher education will surely help such things to pass away, and meantime I hope that all who read those letters will take the advice well to heart and act upon it for the future.

Believe me, dear Madam,  
Yours very truly,  
A TRAINED NURSE.

### DIETETICS AND ANTISEPTICS.

*To the Editor of the "British Journal of Nursing."*

DEAR MADAM,—I read with extreme interest the able article by Mrs. Carmichael Stopes published by you on the above subject. It is impossible to hold the position of matron of a hospital without being aware of the necessity for keeping a very sharp look-out in order that the goods supplied may be up to the samples on which contracts were given to various tradespeople, but Mrs. Stopes opens up possibilities unsuspected before, and it becomes apparent that not only matrons

and ward sisters who are responsible for institutional stores, but all nurses ought to be in the possession of knowledge which will enable them to test the purity of food. When is such knowledge to be acquired? We cannot crowd much more into the three years' curriculum of probationers; it is already filled to overflowing. It seems to me that everything points either to the institution of preliminary training schools, in which intending probationers can gain the special training which is necessary in addition to their practical work before they enter the hospitals at all, or that we must lengthen our period of training. The former plan of preliminary training schools appears to me the more desirable for many reasons. But I go even further than this. I hold that as is found necessary in the case of boys, so with girls, their future profession should be decided about the age of fourteen, and the course of their education directed accordingly. Then we unfortunate matrons would not be expected to cram into three years (which should be devoted mainly to practical work), all the knowledge which it should take at least double that time to acquire thoroughly. Women's work has suffered in the past from a want of thoroughness. It is time we recognised and amended this defect.

Truly yours,  
A PRACTICAL MATRON.

### AN UNPOPULAR BRANCH OF NURSING.

*To the Editor of the "British Journal of Nursing."*

DEAR MADAM,—There is strong sense in Miss Beilby's letter published recently by you. There are, of course, nurses and nurses, and the main object of a private nurse's life may be to obtain the highest fees possible and to give the minimum amount of attention to the patient. But it would be unjust to suppose that all, or even the majority of private nurses come into this category. On the contrary, there are many who devote themselves most whole-heartedly to their patients, nursing them when acutely ill with the utmost skill and devotion and, in a later stage, accommodating themselves to the requirements of a chronic invalid, and lightening the burden of a tedious and uninteresting convalescence with unfailing patience, good temper, and cheerfulness. To my mind it is under such circumstances that the real vocation of a nurse is most severely tested. We need no stimulus, when a patient is hovering between life and death, to fight the reaper who stands near with his sickle in order that we may do our part in wresting his prey from him. But when the victory is won and the patient pronounced out of danger, the strain upon the nurse really begins. It is then her duty to coax back to health a querulous, often unreasonable, invalid; to bear with his whims, to induce him to do things which are repugnant to him, to combat the pessimism which seems inseparable from some forms of illness, to help the patient to take up the burden of life once more. It needs not only a well-balanced nervous system, but a strong sense of duty, as well as a deep fund of sympathy, to enable a nurse to maintain an equable temper and a cheerful serenity under conditions of this sort. Yet, how much the happiness and comfort of a patient depend upon the kindness as well as the skill of his nurse only those who have been ill themselves know. All honour to the private nurses who year in, year out, and under no supervision, give to their patients not only skilful

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)