



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.

"LIFE'S LITTLE WORRIES": FROM A PROBATIONER'S POINT OF VIEW.

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

DEAR MADAM,—Life's little worries for a probationer first begin when she enters a ward to take up the duties appointed to her. We will pass over her state of mind as she dusts and polishes, sweeps and scrubs, until limbs and head ache, and she goes to bed at night to be haunted by visions of brooms and dusters and boxes of polish waltzing wildly round her room.

The first year of a nurse's life is apparently the hardest, but many a nurse in her third year would willingly exchange with what was really a comparatively happy and peaceful time. Then her whole responsibility consisted in keeping the ward clean and tidy, preparing lunches, dinners, and teas, and assisting the senior nurses, when called upon, in their various trying duties. But apart from these inevitable moments of depression, a probationer with the true nursing instinct will find her greatest pleasure in plenty of good work and responsibility.

She does her best, even though at times she wonders if life is worth living when she finds herself suddenly seated on the floor, in the midst of an artistic collection of broken plates and saucers and cup handles; and when that daddy who has been operated on starts up, while still under the influence of the anæsthetic, and gives her "one in the eye"; or when she is shunted about like a goods train from one sphere of work to another.

And then, again, as the months roll on and she finds herself taking a senior's post, what worries and trials lurk in every corner awaiting a favourable opportunity to hurl themselves at her defenceless head.

What are her feelings when a pert junior proclaims to her "She is not going to do what you tell her," and in the hurry and bustle of the morning's work sits down in the bath-room to read her letters? Again, when having strained every point to get her dressings finished before one o'clock dinner, the staff walk in, and poor nurse has to undo each and re-dress them over a aim. She struggles with screens as heavy as herself, and the H. S. stands by caressing his moustache whilst he watches her.

When her Sister has a bad memory, and she faithfully follows her directions this week, to be asked next week why she has done so-and-so.

Nurse is so taken back that she can only stammer out a few words of explanation, and the Sister sails away, wondering under her breath how she came to have such a fool for a nurse.

When she is placed on night duty, and, alas! with the change worries multiply and grow apace.

She tries to get a meal, popping up and down every moment to see what is going on in her ward, and is met at unexpected times by white figures, clothed in

the scantiest of raiment, bent on taking an excursion in spite of her; or she has to scramble underneath a bed to find a man who prefers to sleep there rather than on top. Or perhaps this nurse is in a women's ward, vainly trying to sympathise with a woman who tells her she has got a fly inside her, and keeps all the others awake while she endeavours by her sighs and groans to dislodge him from his coign of vantage.

What naughty words she mutters, when, after a hard night's work, she is roused at 4.30, and the maid presents her with a cup of warm water flavoured with milk, and a choice collection of tea leaves swimming round on top.

But here my pen fails me. I can write no more; "life's little worries" have won the day.

Faithfully yours,

F. H.

IN THE NAME OF COMMON SENSE.

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

DEAR MADAM,—I am not much given to answering letters, but I cannot allow "Comfort at any Cost's" to go unanswered.

She begins by saying that, "At home the poor are accustomed to sleep in a stuffy atmosphere (*accountable for many an illness, you say*)," brushing that opinion aside as a mere trifle, whilst further down she says "the fresh air fad and aseptic condition of the ward *must not be permitted to run riot!*" &c. What in the name of common sense do patients come to hospital for but to be placed in a healthy environment and in surroundings that make for their recovery, instead of those of their homes, that make for disease and death?

Would "Comfort at any Cost" give the hungry typhoid the food he is denied because he wants it? Would she allow the patient who is ordered to lie quite still to roll about in bed and sit up, because he thinks he would be easier? Would she smuggle in the "tot of spirits" to the man who craves for it, because it makes him happier? The desire to spit freely about the floor is an unhealthy but common habit of the British working man—would she allow it in her ward? Many patients have quite as great an objection to washing as they have for fresh air—should they go dirty? Nursing does not consist solely in doing pleasant things for patients, but, largely in doing things for them that, though necessary, cannot by any stretch of imagination be called pleasant—of course, doing them in the kindest and most considerate manner.

I have looked up an entry in my diary that I made when I was a pro, very green, and practically one of the general public:—"Sister _____ is very sweet, but an awful manager. 'As long as the patients are comfortable' is her great motto; but of course patients, like children, have the vaguest and most erroneous idea as to what is best for them—and will, in the end, be most comfortable, if well done by." I remember that ward with horror; its eternal muddle and the endless grumbling of the patients. I do not hesitate to say that fresh air is one of the most necessary articles in a hospital ward, and fresh air *cannot be obtained without open windows.*

Who is there who would nowadays be so stuffy as to sleep with his or her bedroom window shut? I don't suppose such an individual exists amongst "well-to-do private people."

Who does not know the hospital ward—very unusual nowadays, thank goodness!—where the windows are

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