



## 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.*

#### OUR GUINEA PRIZE.

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

DEAR MADAM,—I was pleased to be the lucky one this month. I thank you for guinea received to-day.

Yours truly,

E. TOMPKINS.

The Hospital, North Ormesby, Middlesbro'.

#### MIDWIVES FOR THE POOR.

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

DEAR MADAM,—I heartily endorse your frequently-expressed opinion that the "homely neighbour" is not the right person to provide as a midwife for the rural poor. I say this in no spirit of disparagement of the homely neighbour, for, having worked as a district midwife, I can testify to her usefulness and many good qualities. But her place is as a helper to the registered midwife, not as a midwife herself.

Why? For many reasons; one reason being the same which makes it necessary to select midwives from trained nurses of the highest intelligence. A midwife to be efficient must possess the gift of imagination, and the average "homely neighbour" is not an imaginative person. To illustrate my meaning. In an ordinary surgical operation the wound is patent to the eyes of the nurse. She sees its raw edges, and is able to appreciate the danger of contact with unclean instruments, hands, &c., and of the absorption of septic matter through its surfaces. In midwifery practice the same danger is great or greater, but it does not present itself so obviously. The midwife has to imagine the lacerations which are almost invariably present in a case of midwifery, and consequently to remember the risk of infection from an unclean finger or instrument. It is not easy always. Then as to what constitutes surgical cleanliness—and absolute surgical cleanliness is essential in the midwife—how are even its elements to be conveyed in a few months' training to the homely neighbour? For instance, how often does she take a bath? How often does she change her personal linen, and does she always wear a clean cotton gown? Let those who know something of village life answer. Are her hands, hardened with honourable toil and roughened with hard work, and, if she is clean, constantly in contact with septic matter of all descriptions in the way which she constantly wages with dirt, suitable for the delicate work which devolves on a midwife? Lastly, would any woman of the classes somewhat arrogantly described as "better" and "upper" be content to depend solely on the professional skill of her "homely neighbour"? Scarcely. Then do not let philanthropists endeavour to create one standard of efficiency in the case of the rich and another where the poor are concerned. The stan-

dard of medical education is the same for all, and we must not be content with anything less in the case of midwives and nurses. No, let midwives be as efficient as we can make them. Let them be subsidised by the State if necessary, or let the Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute for Nurses adopt your admirable suggestion and make it a part of its work to bring thoroughly trained midwives within reach of the rural poor, but do not let us do the working woman the wrong of supplying to her as an efficient midwife, charged therefore with the responsible and difficult duty of diagnosis, a woman of very limited general education and only a few months' instruction in midwifery work.

I am, dear Madam,

Yours faithfully,

COMMON SENSE.

#### THE RECANTATION OF THE HON. OFFICERS.

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

DEAR MADAM,—I have to thank you, with others, for the plain and circumstantial statement of fact in reference to the action of the Executive Committee and the Hon. Officers of the R.B.N.A. in relation to the principle of State Registration of Trained Nurses which appeared last week. I have been so often told that it is absolutely untrue that they ever took any action in opposition to State Registration. Your able article, supported as it is by Miss Brey's letter and quotations from the minutes, makes the whole case absolutely clear and irrefutable. No one can define a just system of registration for nurses but themselves, so let us arouse ourselves and fight our own battles. We shall not then find ourselves utilised for ulterior motives by those who are totally out of sympathy with legal status for nurses, and who wish to keep us in the invidious and demoralising position of master and servant which we nurses now occupy towards our various "patrons." The R.B.N.A. may be relied upon to hop off the hedge on the winning side.

Yours truly,

A STRONG REGISTRATOR.

#### WORKHOUSE NURSING IN IRELAND.

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

DEAR MADAM,—As everybody must know, nursing in workhouses in this country is much improved of late years, yet, to the trained nurse, it is not all smooth sailing. The trained and untrained nurse can never work harmoniously together. I think I am safe in presuming that the case is very isolated indeed where the untrained nurse does not still exist in workhouses here.

My experience is, and I am afraid it may be the experience of many others like me, that the introduction of a trained nurse is regarded by these fixtures as an intrusion to be opposed by them in every possible way. Their connection with trained nurses in workhouse wards gives them ample opportunities for this. Professional etiquette and discipline are qualities utterly disregarded by them. To the eye of the expert their work is performed in an unskilled and slovenly style. A kindly hint or well-meant correction from the generally younger and better-informed woman is taken as a studied insult. Brought up almost without exception in the neighbour-

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