



## 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 LIMITATIONS OF TRAINING-SCHOOLS

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

DEAR MADAM,—The question of State Registration of Trained Nurses is one in which I am so interested that I take every opportunity of attending all meetings at which the subject is ventilated. Naturally I am a member of the Society for State Registration, for its courageous policy must commend itself to all who are in earnest on this question, which is one which no private nurse especially can fail to ignore. She more than anyone else comes in contact with the public mind on the subject, and with the abuses which flourish at present owing to the lack of legal status for nurses.

It is, I believe, to the public we must look for support in our claim to Registration, more than to hospital committees, and, with all deference, I do not think the statement of the President of the Royal British Nurses' Association, Princess Christian, at the recent annual meeting—that they "could not ask the State to register nurses until there was agreement between the hospitals"—can hold water. This makes hospital committees the supreme and only authority in relation to the control of the nursing profession. But I ask, is it right or reasonable that we should all our lives be tied to the apron-strings of our training-schools? What, after all, do the committees of hospitals know about the nurses and the important question of nursing education at all? I can honestly say that during three years' probation at a leading London hospital it was the rarest event to see a member of the Committee of Management in the wards, still rarer to speak to one. That these benevolent gentlemen have the kindest feelings towards nurses is undoubted. That it is an article of faith with them that "our Matron" and "our nurses" are the best the world can produce is also certain. But as to actual knowledge of nurses, and nurses' needs, I doubt greatly if any member of the Committee knew me or any other nurse by sight, let alone by name, while we were in the hospital. Why, then, should they be the absolute arbitrators of our destinies now we have left it for many years?

Neither can it be urged that hospital committees have any *locus standi* as educational authorities. In these days of cut-throat competition between hospitals, all striving to induce the public to make up the deficit between their expenditure and their income, the committeeman is chosen, as a rule, for the stability of his banking account and his pull on the purses of the wealthy. Indeed, his position is aptly typified in Sir Noel Paton's wonderful picture of the "Man with the Muck Rake." He is so busily engaged plying his rake and piling up the gold that he has

no time and no eyes for anything else. Small wonder, for the burden of financial responsibility which he has undertaken is a heavy one. At the same time, if hospital committees are to be regarded as educational authorities, then the time has come when in the constitution of these committees this aspect of their work should be considered, and some expert educationalists should be appointed as members of them.

What, so far, has been the attitude of hospital authorities and nurse training-school authorities as to Registration? Their last combined pronouncement was embodied in a resolution passed at a meeting held at St. Thomas's Hospital on January 10th, 1896, which runs:—

"That this meeting of representatives of certain metropolitan nursing institutions and nurses' training-schools, having heard the resolution of the British Medical Association, which is thus cited, re-affirm the position hitherto taken up by them, that a legal system for the registration of nurses is inexpedient in principle, injurious to the best interests of nurses, and of doubtful public benefit, and, failing to recognise in the document circulated by the British Medical Association any reasons for altering their opinion, decline to enter on further discussion of the subject."

That is uncompromising, but I do not believe it is final. Anyway, "it is the duty of the nursing profession of every country to work for suitable legislative enactments regulating the education of nurses, and protecting the interests of the public by securing State examinations and public registration."

It is a duty which the British Nurses' Association, founded for the purpose, has shirked for the last seven years. If it had not, probably hospital committees would by this time have understood the nursing question and, understanding it, would have supported the just demands of trained nurses. But, if the R.B.N.A. shirks its duty and sits upon the hedge, that is no reason why other nurses should not move forward. On the contrary.

I am, dear Madam,

Yours faithfully,

ONE WHO KNOWS HER OWN MIND.

#### RURAL HOUSING AND SANITATION ASSOCIATION.

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

DEAR MADAM,—Will you allow us through your columns to draw attention to this Association, which has recently been formed with the object of improving the condition of housing and sanitation in rural districts.

We desire to enlist more particularly the co-operation of those acquainted with country cottage homes, and to arouse public opinion as to the need for reform.

Owing to the social conditions of country districts it is often impossible for tenants to complain direct either to their landlord or to the local sanitary authority. This Association, unfettered by local interests, is able to come to the help of the tenant by receiving complaints, and to the help of the sanitary authorities by passing on to them information which they might not otherwise obtain.

We are prepared to receive complaints as to insanitary conditions and overcrowding, either from the sufferers themselves or from others. On verification

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