



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.

WHAT IS A TRAINED NURSE?

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

MADAM,—In thanking you for your courtesies in publishing my letter, will you permit me to answer your editorial note? You wish the Holt-Ockley nurses to be called cottage helps, because they help; we call them nurses, because they nurse. Were they incompetent, is it credible that the Holt-Ockley system should have grown in twenty years to number nearly 200 associations? The fact of their being nurses, and good nurses as far as they go, is beyond denial. The use made of them by doctors must, I think, prove so much. We are, surely, not doing more than justice to the members of the medical profession in assuming that their aim is the rapid and complete recovery of their patients. If, then, we find, as is the case, that doctors apply for our nurses, and urge their patients to join our associations, it appears logical to suppose that our nurses are a means of accelerating such recovery.

It is, then, only a question of words. Is it unjust to describe by the same name one who has had only a few months' training and one who has "spent ten arduous years perfecting her knowledge of nursing the sick in the best hospitals"? Emphatically yes! On the other hand, is it palpably unfair to describe a certificated monthly nurse, who spends her life in nursing under medical supervision, as untrained? In the words of Mrs. Gamp (herself the typical untrained nurse), "Aperiently so!" But it is noticeable that those advertising for nurses in the *BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING* inquire almost invariably for "fully-trained" or "thoroughly-trained" nurses. Is not this the solution of the difficulty? Let the aristocracy of the nursing world describe themselves as highly-trained, a term they have themselves selected, and let them leave the humbler name of trained nurse to those who, supplementing their short training by daily careful and conscientious nursing, have fairly earned it.

Yours faithfully,

F. B. DICKINS.

[The above letter appears to us to show an extraordinary ignorance on the part of the writer as to what the term "trained," as applied to a nurse, includes. Yet she, and apparently others also, consider it applicable to women who may never have been inside a hospital at all, but who have merely received a few months' district training in maternity nursing. We may argue that the term implies a thorough hospital training, and still get no further towards a settlement, as no standard for a trained nurse has ever yet been authoritatively defined. The letter published above forms an irrefutable argument for State Registration of Nurses, and for the definition of a minimum qualification for a trained nurse.—Ed.]

ABSOLUTISM v. ORGANISATION.

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

DEAR MADAM,—I read with great interest the letter of Mr. Sydney Holland *re* Registration, in which his well-known antipathy to "Bart's" peeps out. If the nursing system at "Bart's," in conjunction with other hospitals, were perfect, it would not alter the fact that chaos would still reign supreme outside. The truth is that in many instances Committees and Matrons become so absorbed in the management of one little institution that their views become cramped, and the majority neither know nor care what happens outside their own mystic ring. *It is not their legitimate business.* But the good order and efficiency of the profession as a whole is the business of every trained nurse, once she works outside the narrow environment of a hospital.

Matrons, Sisters, staffs, not to mention the mere pros, cannot judge broadly on this Registration question unless they are associated with outside professional and social interests; they do not come in contact with abuses, and they fail to realise them. Imagine in these days placing the whole educational and economic interests of thousands of independent workers in the hands of the monastic orders! It is inconceivable, and yet this is practically the demand of the anti-Registrationist with regard to the nursing profession. No! For the sake of progress and justice, disorganisation is doomed. We nurses have suffered under it for a quarter of a century; we now ask the State to step in and protect us and the sick from the chaotic condition of affairs which has resulted from the training-schools' system of lack of co-operation, and to regulate trained nursing for the public benefit, as it has regulated medicine, midwifery, and every other profession.

I should like to express my gratitude to those public-spirited Matrons who are coming out from the ranks of the obstructionists and ranging themselves on the side of organisation. Their influence is tremendous for good.

A MEMBER BART'S LEAGUE.

ANTI-REGISTRATION TACTICS.

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

DEAR MADAM,—I observe that Mr. Holland suggests that "the matter of State Registration should be argued on its merits." Quite so; but has his point of view any "merits" for the helpless worker? I think not. Also, what "merit" is there in the present plan of campaign of the Matrons opposed to it? I am a member of the Society for State Registration, having joined before I began work here. I have recently been approached by the Matron where I was trained, and urged *most earnestly* to resign my membership of the S.R.S. She is also using every effort to get other members to do the same. The arguments used are very specious, and, no doubt, will influence weak women, who are, unfortunately, easily led. The whole anti-Registration movement emanates from the London Hospital, of which Mr. Holland is Chairman, and measures are being taken at that institution to make the whole nursing staff work against their own interests and that of the profession to which they belong. I see no "merit" in coercing a lot of helpless women, who dare not oppose the dictates of the

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)