



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 DEPRECIATION OF POOR LAW QUALIFICATIONS.

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

DEAR MADAM,—Is it just for Poor Law Guardians to select for a responsible post a nurse with a general hospital certificate in preference to an equally qualified nurse trained in one of our large workhouse infirmaries? It appears to me to be extremely unjust, and it is obviously a short-sighted policy, which augurs ill for the nursing of the sick poor. Some years ago the Local Government Board recognised the larger workhouse infirmaries as training-schools with powers to grant certificates, and this attracted many intelligent women with a taste for nursing to the profession. These, after arduous work and study, now find, to their chagrin, that a certificate from a general hospital is preferred for all the important posts. The infirmiry nurses contend that they are as well trained as their sisters in general hospitals, and there is much to be said in favour of this view. At all events, it is public policy not to unduly hamper or thwart them.

Yours, &c.,

A POOR LAW GUARDIAN.

[We should appreciate an expression of opinion on this question from Matrons and nurses working under the Poor Law.—Ed.]

VALUE OF WOMEN'S LABOUR.

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

DEAR MADAM,—I note with considerable surprise the statement quoted by you that "the openings for women as dispensers are few, and the market is overstocked with applicants for them. The wages they receive from medical men are nearer 10s. a week than £80 a year." Surely, this does not mean that the medical profession expect women, to whom it entrusts the dispensing of dangerous drugs, to live on 10s. a week? Of course they cannot do it, and if they consent to take this paltry remuneration for their skilled services then it must be regarded as pocket-money wages by girls living at home, and dispensing cannot seriously be considered by women as a means of livelihood.

On the other hand, it may be that the £26 a year must be looked upon as salary in addition to board and lodging, in which case the total earnings must be rated at least £100 per annum.

That most invaluable book of reference, the "Englishwoman's Year-Book," contains a short article by Miss Margaret E. Buchanan, Pharmaceutical Chemist and Tutor, on the employment of women as dispensers, from which I find that training in this branch, as laid down in the Pharmacy Act, necessitates a pupilage or apprenticeship of three years, for which the fee varies from £50 to £80, that a

preliminary examination in English, Latin, a modern language, Arithmetic, Euclid, and Algebra must be passed, that laboratory practice during or immediately after the third year of apprenticeship will cost another £25 to £30, that the fee for the "Minor" examination—the passing of which gives the legal right to dispense and sell poisons, and assume the title of chemist and druggist—is ten guineas, so that the course costs the student approximately £100 for the three years, during which time she must support herself. If she wishes to have a right to the title of pharmaceutical chemist, then she must study for another six or nine months and take the "Major" examination.

If, after this prolonged course, a woman can only earn a salary of £26 a year as a dispenser, then she had better turn her attention to other branches of work. Nurses are apt to be discontented at times at their rate of pay, but they do not always consider what they receive in addition to hard cash. Certainly a probationer in a good training-school from the day she enters it as an unskilled worker is paid, if board, lodging, uniform, and washing are taken into consideration, at least at the rate of £60 a year; besides which, if she is laid up with a slight ailment, she is cared for in the home at the expense of the institution, and if she is seriously ill she has the best of medical and nursing skill gratis.

Be it observed, no preliminary examination in general knowledge is required of her, as of the dispenser. Why, then, should educated women take up dispensing at all, if they are to receive starvation pay at the end of a prolonged and expensive training?

Yours faithfully,

ENQUIRER.

A GOVERNMENT SERVICE FOR INDIA.

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

DEAR MADAM,—The proposal to form a Nursing Service for India might do something to raise the status of nurses in that great Empire, but, after all, it is not the right way, to my mind, to organise our profession in that or any other country. In certain definite branches of work, such as the Army and the Navy, in which nurses are employed and paid by the Government, it is right that they should receive the status of Government officials, but, if all the private nurses and others to whom employment is not guaranteed in any way are still to be Government servants, then the Government would have a very unfair pull over the personal liberties of the nurses who depend upon their own exertions to make a livelihood, and, consequently, should be free to arrange their own conditions of work. I hope nurses in India will give this aspect of the question due consideration before enrolling themselves as members of a Government Service, unless the Government intends to guarantee their employment and their salaries.

I am,

Dear Madam,

Yours faithfully,

BEWARE.

THE R.B.N.A. REGISTRATION BILL.

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

DEAR MADAM,—I have read the composition of the Central Board which the R.B.N.A. proposes shall control the profession of nursing, and as a Matron of fifteen years' standing am amazed that the Matrons of

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