



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.

PRETTY PRIVATE NURSES.

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

DEAR MADAM,—I am inclined to think the expression of opinion in the *Daily Express* as to good looks being a disqualification for the private nurse is true. Without vanity, I may say I am considered a pretty woman, and upon several occasions I have been sent back from cases by wives and mothers of male patients, who have frankly told me "they did not think it nice to have a pretty young nurse for male patients." One added: "I promise when my grandmother is *hors de combat* I will send for you" !—Yours,

A POOR PRETTY NURSE.

[Looking over some old hospital notes, dated London Hospital, 1879, it would seem there is nothing new under the sun. "Arrived at the London Hospital. Sat meekly in Sisters' dining-room. Sister Row-sell (Miss C. Beachcroft) came in—very kind. 'Are you the new Charlotte?' she asked. 'Yes,' I replied. 'The Matron has asked me to lend you a cap and take you over to the ward.' Just then a severe-looking woman, wearing a shawl and bonnet, but mercifully followed by a dog (that means she's not as severe as she looks), came into the room. It was the Matron. She came up to the fireplace where I stood, took my hand, looked at me long and sadly, her first words being, 'I will pin your cap on for you'; and later: 'If I had seen you I would never have engaged you—you are too young and pretty.' I said: 'That is all a matter of taste; I am glad I please yours,' which seemed to amuse her, as she smiled a real smile, just like the sun shining out in the blue and chasing away a cloud. I like her; she's straight, but her spring is broken."

Later we find another entry in the year 1880:—"Spent the whole day at Richmond, canvassing medical interest for Matronship, Richmond Hospital; not altogether encouraging, though Dr. — took me up very warmly. Dr. — very courteous, but said: 'Sorry I can't support your candidature; go away, young lady, and paint some wrinkles in your face, or hide it under a poke bonnet,'"

How superficially people judge appearances! Why did not the good man sum me up from the shape of my lower jaw; it is not that of an ass?

Again in 1881:—"Attended a committee of selection at 'Bart's,' dressed for the part—black dress, long sealskin *paletôt*, and a grannie bonnet, specially made by Mme. Tofield, of black lace to cover the ears and tie under the chin; looked *thirty*. Harmless subterfuge. Men are creatures of habit, and it does not do to ruffle their preconceived convictions. I do not include the Treasurer in these reflections. He has an eye that probes beneath the surface; that is all to the good. He will not prefer Miss — because she has a large pimple on her nose and the pose of a pelican. If I lose 'Bart's'

I shall adopt the pimple in preference to Lady Lucy's (an old friend) bonnet."—Ed.]

THEATRE LEAVE.

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

DEAR MADAM,—As the question of theatre leave has been somewhat prominently before the nursing world of late, may I ask for the courtesy of your columns to express my own ideas on the subject.

In the first place, nursing pupils in a hospital are giving themselves to serious work, work which will tax their best energies to perform thoroughly. The recreation which they take should be with a view to recuperating themselves for further work, and I do not think that anyone will assert a nurse who has been out at the theatre until 11.30 p.m. is in the best condition for duty at 7 or 7.30 next morning. When pupils in training are granted theatre leave—and this should be but sparingly—in my opinion it should be given for matinées, not for evening performances. For Sisters and certificated nurses occasional evening leave might be granted, preferably for nurses on the evening before their day off duty, so that they can stay later in bed next morning, but, from every point of view, it seems to me preposterous to give late theatre leave once a week.

What girls of the class from which nurses are as a rule drawn go to the theatre once a week—or once a month, for that matter—when living at home with no definite occupation? Then why should they expect to do so when at work? Again, few seats are obtainable for less than half-a-crown, and even this entails standing for a long time in the *queue*, if the play is at all a popular one. No pupil in training receives more than £20 per annum, even in her third year, and few have resources beyond. Is it right that they should be encouraged to spend one-third of this amount on theatre tickets?

Further, what sort of preparation for private nursing is this life of constant excitement? No wonder that the public complain of the restlessness of nurses! Have we quite lost the spirit of devotion to work which characterised our pioneers? Must we for ever be planning, not what we can give, but what we can get? Let us beware. We claim to be professional workers. What is the essential difference between a trade and a profession? In a trade so much work is given for so much pay. But as professional workers we must realise that we are unworthy of our calling if we do not always give the best that is in us, and that many things are incumbent upon us which can never be paid for in hard cash. If we are always planning our own pleasure, our own advantage, we shall lose the motive power which raised nursing to the level of a respected profession, and make it merely an article of commerce. I hope I may not live to see the day.—Yours faithfully,

MATRON.

PRIVATE NURSING IN THE TROPICS.

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

DEAR MADAM,—I notice with interest in your columns that the nursing question in India is assuming much the same aspects as it is at home—a want of definite status, lack of organization in the ranks of graduate nurses, lack of attraction to capable women, poor pay, the masquerading of semi-trained persons as qualified nurses, and the inevitable depreciation of nursing as a whole. The proposal to form a Nursing

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