



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.

A DESERVING HOSPITAL.

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

DEAR MADAM,—The North-Eastern Hospital for Children, Hackney Road, Bethnal Green, in the midst of some of the poorest districts of London, is in danger of being compelled through lack of sufficient support to close half of its wards at the end of December. A new building, increasing the number of beds from fifty-seven to 114, was completed (and brought into use) in 1903 at a cost of £37,000, all but £9,000 of which has been obtained. This scheme has received the full approval and generous financial support of King Edward's Hospital Fund.

The pressure on the enlarged hospital has continued to be very severe, and the beds are always full. The ordinary annual expenditure, formerly £6,500, has been increased to £11,000. The receipts, however, have unfortunately remained almost stationary, and a debt of £4,000 has already been incurred through the increased expenditure on maintenance. In view of the debt of £9,000 on the new building the Committee feel that the time has come when the increase of liabilities should cease, and they have decided, with great reluctance, to withdraw fifty-seven of the beds from use at the end of December, unless adequate assistance can be obtained in the meantime.

The disorganisation and general inconvenience resulting from such a step can only be fully appreciated by those concerned in the management of similar institutions, but all can realise the suffering that would be caused in this crowded neighbourhood by the withdrawal of any hospital accommodation, more especially at this time of unusual distress. Never before in the history of the hospital have wards been closed for want of funds, and we earnestly hope that the public will remove the necessity for so calamitous a step by subscribing liberally to the Special Fund opened for the purpose.

Cheques, &c., crossed "Barclay and Co., Ltd.," should be sent to the Secretary at the hospital.

We are, Madam, your most obedient servants,
AMHERST OF HACKNEY, President.
WILLIAM CECIL, Chairman.

BACTERIOLOGY FOR PROBATIONERS.

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

DEAR MADAM,—Theoretically, of course, "Surgical Sister" and "E. L. C. Eden" are quite right about the injury to nurses' hands by ward cleaning; but, practically, as the Matron of a busy hospital, and moreover, a poor one, how is it to be avoided? It appears to me impossible so to arrange the ward work that those who attend to dressings, &c., shall be exempt from their share of cleaning. One ward maid cannot do all the necessary cleaning in the time allowed, and

surely a dirty ward would, in the end, be worse for patients than roughened hands, which can be disinfected. The only way would be for new probationers to do nothing but cleaning, and staffs nothing but nursing. But how, then, are the former to be taught to become skilful in surgical work? I own it is beyond me.

Yours,

A PUZZLED MATRON.

MADAM,—I am head of a Nursing Home. The nursing staff polish all tins, &c., used by patients, and dust rooms. During two years we have never had a septic case.

Yours,

PRACTICAL PERSON.

PRIVATE NURSING IN THE FUTURE.

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

DEAR MADAM,—The independent co-operating private nurse is being hard pressed on all sides, and it would almost appear as if she were doomed to be snuffed out altogether in this country, where women have no sense of sex or professional loyalty. Every year it becomes more difficult for her to maintain her position or get work. And the opposing factors which are sapping her industrial independence are year by year undermining her existence.

First.—Take the great subsidised charitable institutions like the London Hospital. First of all, they will not train a nurse unless she concludes a contract with the Committee to undersell her certificated colleagues—a probationer must sign a contract that after two years' training in the wards, at the discretion of the Matron, she must go out and compete with fully-trained *three years' certificated* private nurses. She accepts pay upon which an outside private nurse cannot possibly exist, thus cutting at the base of sound economic conditions in the private nursing world; and, moreover, as the member of the staff of a hospital maintained by charitable subscriptions, she becomes part and parcel of a system which enters into most unjust competition with trained and skilled workers. I wonder what the medical faculty at the London Hospital would think if half-educated medical students were subsidised by the Hospital Committee, to enter into professional competition in the West-end with registered medical practitioners, and farmed out for a profit for the benefit of the institution!

The whole medical staff would resign *en bloc*, and small blame to them; but because nurses are women, and at the best their pay is poor, it is considered justifiable to grind them down still further by this most abominable subsidised *charitable* competition.

Secondly.—Go into the country and consider the system of many county nursing associations. Headed by a titled and wealthy president; a network of mutual benefit nursing societies are spread over the land—by no means on the sound charitable basis of Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses—whereby thoroughly efficient trained nurses are provided by the rich for the necessitous poor—not at all, from squire to scullion all combine to undersell the certificated trained nurse. By a system of subscriptions of a quite inadequate order all classes in a district may avail themselves of the services of the semi-trained nurses provided, the very poor pay a few pence weekly, the rich never more than 10s. a week, for the services of the village nurse. But why should the squire and his class utilise the village nurse at all?

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