



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.

NURSING ORGANISATION IN AUSTRALASIA.

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

DEAR MADAM,—As a Victorian nurse, Miss Bell's letter in your last issue interested me greatly. What we ought to have is an Australasian Federation of Nurses on the lines of the American Federation. Each State should have an independent Association, from which delegates should form the Governing Body of the Federation, otherwise there will naturally be jealousy and dissatisfaction. We Victorian nurses do not care to be a Branch of the New South Wales Association, and why should we? All States should deal locally with nursing matters and affiliate in a Federation, which should act as our National Council of Nurses, and be affiliated to the International Council. The American plan is so simple, and evidently works splendidly, to judge from the reports in the *American Journal of Nursing* recently to hand. It proves also what talent women when in power have for detail, and how wonderfully harmonious is their conduct of affairs. I hope you will find space for this letter, as your Journal carries great weight in Australasia as the only English nursing paper which can possibly express the true views of nurses, apart from commercial interests.

Yours very truly,
A VICTORIAN NURSE.

THE EFFECTS OF EDUCATION.

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

DEAR MADAM,—I read with much interest last week your editorial remarks on the above subject, and most heartily agree with them. It seems to me that private nurses, perhaps more than any others, need the liberal education which you advocate, for they have to deal with all kinds of circumstances and people.

It has been my lot to employ many, and I must express a strong preference for the educated woman, who is also something of a woman of the world. Nearly every nurse I have had has performed her professional duties satisfactorily, but the difference in them in the house is untold. Some are evidently most at ease when hob-nobbing with the servants, and one is obliged to own that it is society of this kind to which they are most accustomed. Although the nurse may be unremitting in her attendance on the patient (some of this type are and some are not), I do not consider that the trait is at all desirable. A nurse is necessarily admitted to many confidential matters, and it is not pleasant to contemplate one's private affairs being discussed in the kitchen.

Then, again, there is the nurse fresh from her training-school, brimming over with importance, highly developed on the nursing side, and whose mind seems

otherwise quite blank. If you mention the most ordinary general topic, she has no idea what you are talking about, and as for a newspaper, she never looks at one. She is usually anxious to impress you with her social equality, or, may be, superiority, and requires a very considerable amount of waiting on and homage from the servants—by way, I suppose, of emphasising her gentility.

Then there is the woman who comes into your house, capable and unobtrusive, quietly shoulders your burdens, is always at hand when wanted, and never in evidence when she is not. The patient has entire confidence in her, the maids would do anything for her, and the house generally is the better for her presence. Such a nurse has not necessarily social rank, but I have almost invariably found her to be a well-educated woman, and she has frequently travelled considerably. Briefly, she has *savoir faire*, and this, after all, is what the public needs in a private nurse, and what too often it does not get. We hear a good deal about the need for tact on the part of a nurse, but tact, after all, is largely a product of life-long education, it cannot be instilled with professional knowledge in a three years' course, and some most estimable and efficient nurses have it not.

I would, therefore, appeal to those who have the selection of candidates for training as nurses, to choose those who give evidence of good education and culture. However it may be in hospitals, what the public needs is well-balanced women, not those with an excrescence on one side where their nursing faculties have been developed, and who otherwise have minds the abysmal ignorance of which, even in relation to the most ordinary everyday matters, appears to be unfathomable.

I am, Dear Madam,
yours faithfully,
EMPLOYER.

INFECTED HANDS.

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

DEAR MADAM,—I am very glad to see the remarks of Dr. Stokes Hatton, as printed in your journal last week, in relation to "the very little importance which is attached to the advisability of preventing the hands from becoming infected" in connection with surgical work. The point has been referred to previously in your columns, but I do not remember to have seen any reference to it elsewhere. Yet surely it is much more sensible to endeavour to keep one's hands out of the way of infection than to trust to the removal of such infection when it has been contracted.

Beyond the infection contracted from handling septic wounds and dressings instead of using dressing forceps, there is the larger question of the nurse who is required by some nursing associations to live in the home of the patient and do all the housework when the mother is ill. Under such an arrangement several points present themselves for criticism. I will refer only briefly to the strange fact that no one but the mother is apparently expected to be ill, and also to the economic waste in requiring a skilled nurse to spend a considerable amount of her time in performing duties such as scrubbing, blacking grates, &c., which would be done as well or better by any working woman who could keep her own house clean. What I am concerned to point out is that if a nurse goes into residence in a dirty cottage, having undertaken to do the housework she will (or should) not rest content until she has turned out

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