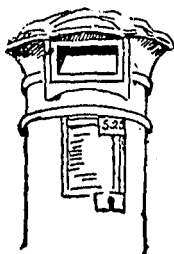


Letters to the Editor.

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 ISOLATION OF TUBERCULOSIS PATIENTS.

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

DEAR MADAM,—I am glad to note that some steps are being taken to discuss the question of the desirability of providing adequate hospital accommodation for those suffering from tuberculosis. No one can go amongst the poor without realising that many of those in the early stages of the disease could be cured if it were taken in time, and the patients were treated under proper conditions. As it is they too often die by inches in an atmosphere laden to them with poison in the one room in which the family—the invalid included—lives, eats, and sleeps. And if this means death to the patient it means it no less to other members of the family, who underfed, overworked, and breathing impure air fall a ready prey to the infection with which they are continually in contact. Probably the doctor and the district nurse alone know how many deaths from this disease are preventable and how widespread may be the spread of infection from a single case in a crowded tenement. If the Lewisham Guardians succeed in securing the isolation and treatment of consumptives they will have done a good work for the welfare of the nation the far-reaching effects of which will be difficult to estimate.

I am, Dear Madam,
Yours faithfully,
A WORKER AMONGST THE POOR.

NURSES IN FICTION OR FICTITIOUS NURSES.

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

DEAR MADAM,—Many nurses will deplore with you the portrayal of trained nurses by Mr. Maxwell in his wonderful book "The Guarded Flame." Many of us have met these vulgar-minded women in private work, but we have also met many more kind and skilful nurses, who give up sleep, fresh air, and appetising food willingly in the performance of their duty. It does seem most unfortunate that all novelists seem to come across the wrong sort of nurse. But with the private nursing market flooded with the semi-trained and unfit, I suppose this is inevitable.

But novelists must cast a halo of romance, or at least interest over their characters, and the "angel" type of woman in fiction is quite out of date. She would read unreal, dull, and dowdy, and in these ultra-smart days, even our nurses may be nasty, as long as they do not pall.

Take a hospital ward as described by poor Mrs.

Craigie in her last work, "The Dream and the Business." Can anything be more unlike a hospital ward than the following picture. "When they reached the hospital, it was not at the hour for visitors, nor was it visitors' day. But, as Firmalden was acquainted with the Secretary, the rule was relaxed. Nannie had been placed, as a paying patient, in a small room adjoining one of the wards. As Firmalden passed down the double row of beds, each occupied by some afflicted creature, groaning, or weeping, or dry-eyed, or sleeping from exhaustion, or waiting in terror for the afternoon's operation, or stupefied by the scene, or sobbing with despair; some old, some young, some middle-aged, some mere children; some degraded, some spiritualised by anguish, some with the seal of death upon their countenances, a few with a shadowy hope, a few ignominiously cheerful because they themselves were recovering; and all bearing the marks of torture, well or ill borne, he thought 'Yet people doubt a hell!'"

Now, dear Madam, has any trained nurse worked in such a ward? I say, without hesitation, never! Presumably it was a women's ward, and those of us who have passed years of our lives in such wards know that with the very rarest exceptions the women who pass through our hospitals are the personification of courage—moral and physical—that there is never anything ignominious about their splendid cheerfulness—that their unselfish interest in and kindness to one another is one of the finest examples we nurses can follow, and that a hospital ward is often far more like our preconceived idea of heaven than hell.

These unreal and highly coloured literary pictures of nurses and patients are calculated to give false impressions to the public who study them, and discredit the work of healing the sick.

I am, Dear Madam,
Yours truly, S. B.

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

DEAR MADAM,—I am inclined to think most nurses in fiction are drawn from the life. My own experience has been sad indeed. A few months ago a nurse who the operating surgeon insisted, against my judgment, upon my husband (the patient) taking with him to the sea, nearly poisoned him with a double dose of a narcotic, and his life was only saved after great suffering. Ultimately I learned she had only been trained for a short time in a Poor Law Infirmary—where surgical cases were very few—and she did not know by heart the common scale of weights and measures of the British Pharmacopœia. Why do operating surgeons employ such ignorant women? Surely it is bad for their own reputations, as naturally one would never again run the risk of having such a dangerous person thrust upon one. Surely State Registration, by setting a standard of practical education and examination for nurses would save surgeons trouble, and patients suffering and anxiety.

Yours, ALICE M. C.

[We think State Registration would be just for all concerned.—ED.]

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