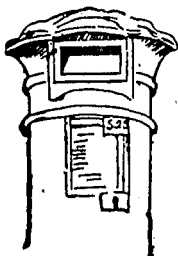


**Letters to the Editor.**

NOTES, QUERIES, &amp;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 ARMY NURSING SERVICE.**

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

DEAR MADAM,—My questions to Mr. Haldane having received some comment in your journal, I venture to address the following remarks to you:—

If we regard a nurse as a woman, highly trained in a profession second to none in the world, and necessarily of discreet age, it seems strange that in the twentieth century she should be treated as if unfit to look after herself. Years ago women were the legal chattels of their men-folk. You would apparently have them regulated and controlled in a similar manner by the public service.

The officer in the army and navy, and also the female Post Office clerk, has his or her appointed hours for being on and off duty. The public service rightfully demands that they shall be competent and punctual in the performance of their duties. If they misuse their off-duty hours, their work is impaired and their continued employment or promotion is rightfully jeopardised. You say: "If she (the nurse) is dancing till the small hours of the morning, it is very improbable that she will be fit to take up her work next day at the usual hour." Very true, but has the medical officer no nerve and strength-straining duties? Has he no need of being in the pink of condition for their performance? Is he to be allowed to dance till the small hours of the morning, and will you rest assured that such is his wisdom, strength, and discretion that the steady hand and nice judgment that may be required of him a few hours after, are certain to be there?

Your reply will be that he may be trusted to use his liberty in such a manner as not to abuse it or to injure his patients. Precisely the same reply can be made on behalf of the nurses. Night-long dances are not weekly or even monthly pleasures that professional women have either the chance of or the desire for.

You say: "It is not desirable that any nurse should be dancing through the night with the medical officer under whose directions she performs her work," and you speak of "the due observance of the usual etiquette between their respective professions." Do doctors and nurses then belong to different social spheres? This information afforded in a journal for nurses will afford the nursing profession some little amazement. Nurses have been known to marry doctors more than once without any very disastrous social or other consequences to their husbands. Further, nurses at Netley play Badminton and lawn

tennis with the doctors; go sailing with them, and take part in paper chases with them. During the South African war there was either no dancing restriction or it was relaxed. Nurses at Netley go to parties attended by doctors, and there is no information at my disposal to prove that on these occasions the nurses have their meals in the kitchen. Nurses sometimes go for walks with doctors when off duty with I believe no injury to society or the due performance of their duties.

If a cultivated woman ("lady" or "gentlewoman" if you prefer) belonging to a noble profession cannot be trusted to behave herself as she should, or to so use her hard-earned leisure so as not to injure her health, it would appear to me that she ought to be turned out of the profession. As a matter of fact the absurd and antiquated regulation that treats her as a child or a fool or (is this it?) a wily snapper up of unconsidered trifles (such as doctors and officers) is one for which there is no honest justification. We treat men as men. It is quite time we treated women as women. Independence is the only ground on which to build character. I may perhaps say that I am disinterested in making these remarks, because I regard dancing as a stupid "method of barbarism," all the more stupid because always indulged in by civilised people in artificially-lighted and badly-ventilated rooms, instead of, as in the case of genuine savages, in the sunshine and pure air.

This in no way detracts from the injustice of the present sex disability.

Yours obediently,

ATHELSTAN RENDALL.

House of Commons,

[There is so much in Mr. Athelstan Rendall's letter, criticising our recent editorial remarks on Dancing and Discipline in the Army Nursing Service, with which we are in entire sympathy, that we feel sure he will welcome our further remarks upon points in which we do not agree.

Mr. Rendall writes: "Years ago women were the legal chattels of their men folk. You would apparently have them regulated and controlled in a similar manner in the public service." In this connection so long as women are unenfranchised they are still "chattels," not only of their men folk, but of the whole community, they are slaves, because they are compelled to obey laws they do not help to make—or to go to gaol for breaking them. This by the way.

Our point was, and is, that efficiency and good discipline demand that the members of Queen Alexandra's Military Nursing Service should conform to regulations which are best fitted to produce these conditions, and as their duties are at present organised they can in no way be compared to those of the medical staff, or non-resident Post Office clerks. Staff Nurses in the Army must be on duty in the wards at 7 a.m., and according to the regulations "must take a full share in duties which are necessary, however unpleasant . . . in attending to the patients' wants." "They must scrupulously refrain from relegating an unfair share of routine work to the orderlies." In other words, a good bit of hard

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