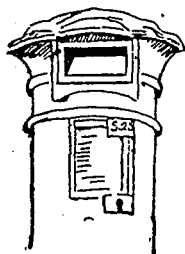


## Letters to the Editor.



*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.*

### MIDWIVES AND THE DEAD.

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

DEAR MADAM,—May I humbly offer a few suggestions to your correspondent, "A Parson's Wife"? To me it appears that an enormous amount of stupid conventionality is wrapped round the subjects of birth and death, and it generally ensures for these inevitable events the worst possible conditions. I use the word conditions in its widest sense. Why should not "A Parson's Wife" the next time a death from a non-infectious disease occurs in her parish obtain the attendance of a trained nurse and herself take a lesson in the laying out of the dead, with the object of instructing the cottage mothers in this simple office. There is no difficulty or mystery in the matter, and, with occasional exceptions, there is nothing revolting in rendering such service. To my mind it seems infinitely more fitting that the bodies of the departed should be handled by those who have cared for them in life, than that a stranger should undertake the preparation for burial. Personally, I would far rather that no one touched my physical encasement after I had left it but those to whom it was dear while I lived in it; and it always seems to me somewhat sacrilegious to abandon the dead to hired hands, albeit such hands sometimes bring much tenderness to the task.

In the case of death from infectious disease, the necessary precautions are quite simple and easily learned. That so many should regard laying out the dead as "a gruesome occupation" is only due to the morbid conditions so falsely attached to it. Every wife, mother, and daughter should be able to perform this duty for her own loved ones when it falls due.

Another point is the extravagance connected with the conventional disposing of the dead. Cottage householders are never in a position to pay the fees for hired labour, and it would be doing a public service to introduce any changes that would put an end to part at least of such extravagant practices. I once nursed in conjunction with a friend a case of puerperal fever in a humble home. The patient was in great danger for weeks and required incessant care, so a woman who "goes out nursing" was employed at a weekly wage to take care of the baby, under our supervision. The baby died, and I well remember the distress of the relative who was keeping house, and our own indignation, when the woman demanded an extra five shillings "for laying out the baby." We would gladly have done what was necessary ourselves to have spared them a serious expense.

Parsons' wives have such magnificent opportunities for teaching, and for raising to higher planes the common events of cottage life. They and their co-workers are usually intelligent enough to be able to learn by reading—and all subjects are now dealt with in literature, or through classes—so much that would make for alleviation, for truer economy, and truer views of life and death, if handed on to the cottagers by a sympathetic instructor. Especially could they teach mothers the home nursing which is often undertaken by the cottage nurse, or is not done at all.

As to the Cottage Nurse herself, the truly false economy of her as an institution has already been amply demonstrated in the pages of this Journal.

I am, faithfully yours,

AN ECONOMIST.

### SISTERS FOR BEYROUT.

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

DEAR MADAM,—May I again make use of your valuable Journal to thank those who have applied for the post of Sister at the Beyrout Municipal Hospital, in response to my advertisement in your columns, and to tell them that the Governor has been changed, and that with the Commission I am now waiting for the development of the new and utterly unexpected events.

We all feel that we shall have much more scope for action now, but we want to know to what extent.

In any case the applicants will not be required till October, when the heat will be over and the buildings finished.

I feel rejoiced at the new and fresh life which is opened for Syria, nay, for the whole East, and at the grand opportunities of helping the people which we have before us. But the work must be done by cultured, experienced women, who can bring all their superior knowledge to bear on these circumstances. For organisers and enthusiasts I cannot imagine a more interesting life, they must realise, however, that the other hospitals are nursed by Sisterhoods, and that the professional British woman must show herself as loyal and unselfish as they are.

Gratefully yours,

EDLA R. WORTABET.

### AN APPRECIATION.

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

DEAR MADAM,—I thank you very much for the article you inserted regarding our class of 1908, and appreciate your kindness very much.

Yours very truly,

AGNES S. WARD, *Superintendent.*

Metropolitan Training School,  
Blackwell's Island, New York.

## Comments and Replies.

*Certificated Nurse.*—We should advise you to obtain the certificate of the Central Midwives' Board. A list of the recognised training schools is published by the Board, Caxton House, Westminster, S.W.

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