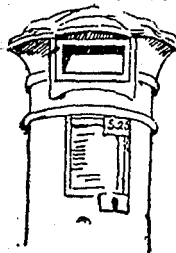


Letters to the Editor.



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.

MR. SYDNEY HOLLAND AND POOR-LAW INFIRMARIES

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

DEAR MADAM,—I asked the Matron who wrote to you to justify her statement that I had "endeavoured to injure the reputation of those who are working as faithfully and as devotedly as the nurses of the great voluntary hospitals." I knew that in the whole of my evidence I had not referred, except to speak well of it, to the treatment patients received when in the Infirmaries. In answer 32619, I said so in so many words, "extremely well treated," "as well as in hospitals." Yet this answer is, I hope not wilfully, omitted by your correspondent. From beginning to end she has misread my evidence. When I said that "A Poor-Law Infirmary does not treat patients the same—it is not educational," I was making answer, as anybody can see who can read, to the question whether an Infirmary could take the place of a hospital, and was not referring to the "education of nurses," as my allusion to the operations would indicate. But I really do not feel it would be of any use to go all through my evidence. I shall be glad to send it to anyone who cares to read it, and they will see that I made no reflection whatever on the treatment of patients when in the Infirmaries, but only to their treatment before they got there and the reluctance of the Poor-Law authorities to help sick people.

Father Higley has read the evidence, and so far qualifies his first attack on me as to say that what I said was a "very bitter pill with a thin coating of sugar." He asks me to define the "stigma of pauperism." I cannot define anything. I only know what I meant, and that was that many people feel it to be a disgrace to seek relief from the Poor-Law authorities who do not think it a disgrace to accept it from a hospital. Nobody will deny this.

If asked what I thought of the treatment of the poor in Infirmaries, I should say that in all the large London ones, and probably the large provincial ones—but of that I am ignorant—it was excellent, but that in the smaller ones scattered over the country they were generally understaffed with nurses, and that many relics of barbarism remained, such as pauper inmates relegated to look after after children. Salford, by the bye, seems pretty bad, to judge by the account in your present issue. It is not long since, however, that I visited one of the largest Poor-Law Infirmaries in the United Kingdom, Craighlockhart, in Edinburgh. There were 800 inmates, all certified to be sick, though they were not so—280 of them really ill, and on the hospital side. There were 90 phthisical

patients, and to 42 of these there was only one nurse by day and one by night. There were four wards with 18 beds in each, with only one night nurse between them all! Pauper women were looking after the children. To all these patients there was but one resident medical officer, and she a girl of 26 years of age! Aided only by a consultant visitor, visiting twice a week, her duties were to examine every patient on entrance, to settle diets and treatment of all who were actually sick, to supervise the nursing, and to treat the patients. There was a phthisical ward, a surgical ward, an ophthalmic ward, children's ward, a lying-in ward, and a male venereal ward, and she had to do the *post-mortems*. There was no proper operating-room, nor any proper arrangements for sterilisation.

When I wrote all this to the local papers, the *Guardians* replied, as usual, that all was perfect, and that "it was to be deplored that any honourable gentleman, holding a high position in private life, should privately visit an institution—" and so on. I had gone with an official of the Scotch Local Government Board, with an introduction from Mr. John Burns. Loyalty is all very well, but it can be carried too far, and "Matron" and Father Higley, in taking off their coats to defend their own Infirmaries, which were never attacked, and only praised by me, must not defend all Poor-Law Infirmaries—nor would I defend all hospitals.

Yours faithfully,

SYDNEY HOLLAND.

Kneesworth Hall, Royston, Herts.

RUBBER CUSHIONS.

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

MR DEAR MADAM,—Can you advise me what to do with rubber air cushions and water beds, when they have once begun to leak? I have sent air pillows up to London and the firm returned them, saying that they were unable to repair them. We use a great many, and they seem to get out of order very soon. I have sometimes thought that indiarubber merchants might allow something on them if they were properly cleaned and disinfected.

May I say how much pleasure and profit I derive from your nursing paper, which I take always.

I remain,

Yours sincerely,

A DEVONSHIRE MATRON.

[We fear such perished goods have no commercial value. Some of our readers may, perhaps, be able to advise this correspondent, as the cost of rubber goods is a considerable item in hospital expenditure.—ED.]

Notices.

Will our readers kindly notice that communications for the *Editor* should be addressed to her at the editorial office, 20, *Upper Wimpole Street, London, W.* If sent to 11, *Adam Street, Strand*, they are delayed a post, and consequently may arrive too late for insertion.

OUR PUZZLE COMPETITION.

Rules for competing for the Pictorial Puzzle Prize will be found on Advertisement page xii.

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