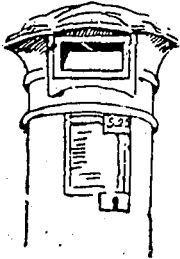


Letters to the Editor.



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.

OUR GUINEA PRIZE.

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

DEAR MADAM,—It was with pleasure I heard that the Puzzle Prize had been awarded to me, and beg to acknowledge the cheque for £1 ls. with many thanks.

Yours truly,

A. SUMMERS.

Meathop Home,
Westmorland Sanatorium,
Grange-over-Sands.

ABSOLUTE ELECTION COMMITTEES.

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

DEAR MADAM,—I notice in your last issue that the Governors of the Royal Hants County Hospital, Winchester, propose to substitute an Election Committee for a Selection Committee, in connection with any appointments which may be made in that institution, the reason given by the Chairman being that "it would remove an invidious distinction which sometimes occurred under the old system, when an individual was recommended for adoption and was not in fact elected by the Court." In view of the present-day tendency to make an Election Committee the supreme and final authority in regard to important appointments I should like to draw attention to one or two points which seem to me important. (1) To err is human. Even the judgment of a learned judge is not infallible, and our British system of justice provides for such a contingency. An aggrieved litigant can appeal from a County Court to the High Courts, and from the High Courts to the House of Lords, and the judgment of the higher Court not infrequently reverses that given in the lower. The right of appeal is therefore most important and highly prized. (2) The enactment of new laws is safeguarded in the same way. A Bill must be submitted and passed by the House of Commons, the House of Lords, and must then receive the Royal Assent before it becomes law, and is placed on the Statute Book. Here again the liberties of the people are protected against hasty legislation which might afterwards prove undesirable or unjust. (3) Again, what is the procedure when the appointments to higher posts under the Local Government Board in poor law infirmaries, or under the Metropolitan Asylums Board are made? A Sub-Committee, or Standing Committee, first goes through the applications and recommends the claims of the most eligible candidates to the consideration of the Guardians of the Union concerned, or to the Metropolitan Asylums Board. The higher authority then proceeds to

make the appointment *subject to the approval of the Local Government Board*, and it is only when that approval is given that the appointment is confirmed. Every care therefore is taken in making it, but, once made, the candidate appointed has security of tenure. He, or she, can only be dismissed by the Local Government Board, and he has the right to ask for a public enquiry by an official of that Board before such dismissal is carried into effect. The interests of all concerned are thus safeguarded.

But what happens when a Board of Hospital Governors deposes certain of its duties to an Election Committee, and makes its decisions final? The Governors may repudiate responsibility for the appointments made in their name, and place this on their subordinate committee, but the responsibility nevertheless still remains theirs. Nineteen centuries ago, in a Jewish Court of Justice, the presiding judge disclaimed responsibility for the sentence of capital punishment, which he reluctantly passed on a Divine victim in response to popular clamour, and the insidious whisper, "If thou let this man go thou art not Cæsar's friend." What availed Pilate's ceremonial act of washing his hands in public, typifying that he repudiated the responsibility which was his, and which at the time was accepted by the Jewish mob? To-day the world holds Pontius Pilate responsible for that judicial murder.

My point is, Madam, that the supreme authority is the authority upon whom responsibility falls, and no amount of repudiation can absolve it from that responsibility.

Therefore if an Election Committee weakly yields to pressure or makes a mistake in the heat of controversy, I hold that no Governing Body has a right to say, in effect, "Yes, a mistake has been made, but we have no power to rectify it; we have delegated our powers to the Election Committee." No body of persons has a right to make a gift of things which do not belong to it, and the powers of Governors are a trust not absolute.

Whether or not trustees depute their duties to others they are responsible in fact and in law.

I hope, therefore, that before the Governors of the Royal Hants County Hospital nominally renounce their obligations they will consider this matter further.

I am, Madam,

Yours faithfully,

CERT. ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL.

Notices.

CONTRIBUTIONS.

The Editor will at all times be pleased to consider articles of a suitable nature for insertion in this Journal—those on practical nursing are specially invited.

Advertisements and business communications should be addressed to the Manager, BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING, 11, Adam Street, Strand, W.C.

OUR PUZZLE PRIZE.

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

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