

[The attitude of mind of the writer of the above letter, towards womanhood in general, is of so convincing a character that we feel sure no remarks of ours are required to emphasise the danger to any class of women workers being controlled by so intolerant a type. We would ask our readers to refresh their memories on the question under discussion—the Depreciation of District Nursing and the sweating of Village Nurses—by referring to our article which appeared in the issue of November 16th last. Our demand is, and (in spite of the arrogant denial of our correspondent of our right to an opinion concerning the nursing profession, of which we have been an active member for thirty-four years), we shall continue to demand, that before women, whatever their class, are entrusted by lay, self-elected committees with the care of the sick poor, they shall be efficiently trained, and when so trained they shall be paid a just salary for their work. This appears to us an entirely unemotional business proposition, although it may not appeal to the "reason" of our correspondent. We may pass over as irrelevant impertinent personalities. They break no bones.

The fact remains that the standard of knowledge for village nurses, as defined by lay County Nursing Associations, is in the opinion of nursing experts dangerously insufficient, and we may add, the valuable lives of the sick poor are often at the mercy of persons whom the members of these committees would not employ during sickness in their own homes. These workers are encouraged to consider themselves "trained" and "skilled" nurses by the committees who employ them. They are neither one nor the other. Moreover, the name of "nurse" is substituted for the legal title of "certified midwife" conferred upon them by the State, for no other reason, as far as we can gather, than to deceive the sick poor as to their real lack of nursing status.

Our correspondent claims that village nurses are under "constant expert supervision." We deny this. It is not possible in rural districts. It is impossible for Superintendents and Inspectors in far country places to exercise "constant" or effective "supervision" over the work of village nurses. Weeks elapse between visits, and it is our experience that between times the village nurse is usually "supervised" by a lady of social position, who knows nothing of trained nursing and has never spent twenty-four hours in a hospital ward in her life.

The "novice" in the hospital service has a small salary, but she is a pupil learning a skilled profession, by which, in the future, she can earn an honourable livelihood; and is under "constant expert supervision"; but that a "novice" employed by County Nursing Associations, should not only be supplied to the trusting and ignorant poor as a skilled worker, but be compelled to pay for the experience gained at their expense, is the acme of class impertinence—both classes being poor are thus spitefully treated by their social superiors, who treat the economic needs of each with equal

contempt. As to whether the wages of the nurse "novice," compare satisfactorily with those earned by "boys," employed, presumably in rural districts, in feeding the pigs and cleansing the crew-yard, is an item of political economy which might receive consideration at the next District Nursing Conference!

We are well aware that all wage-earners, even Cabinet Ministers, are servants of the public, who pay their salaries, although this fact would appear to slip their elastic memories when they urge that tax-paying women should be chucked downstairs, when they venture to remind them in public that all taxation without representation is tyranny. But, in this connection, the poor are not asked by their social superiors "what they want," as to the quality of their nursing, but are compelled to submit to the ministrations of those supplied to them by irresponsible Associations, who thus dictate to the ratepayer what standard of nursing he shall employ.

Like the majority of tax-paying, rate-paying professional women, we are fully aware, that such abuses as that under discussion—the provision of women's unskilled work as "skilled," to the defenceless poor, at sweated rates of remuneration for the worker, because the system is cheap, will never cease until we women have the political power to stop it.

It is not merely a "heavenly vision" that the population should be justly and generously treated when sick. It is the practical aim of every trained nurse worthy of the name, and long may it continue to be so. To offer them a shoddy substitute is to mock their urgent necessities.—Ed.]

COMMENTS AND REPLIES.

Richmondite.—Will "Richmondite" send her name to the Editor, not for publication, but because it is our journalistic rule that those who write under a pseudonym for publication should furnish their names for the Editor's information?

OUR CHRISTMAS COMPETITION.

TOYS FOR TINIES.

Four Five Shilling Prizes will be awarded in December for the best toys made at the cost of not more than 6d. The toys must be sent to the Editorial Office, 20, Upper Wimpole Street, London, W., by December 14th, with the coupon appearing in this issue on page XII. All the toys will be distributed to poor children under five years of age, so they should be made to meet the tastes of tinies.

OUR PRIZE COMPETITIONS.

December 14th.—Describe the treatment of Rodent Ulcer.

December 21st.—How would you amuse a convalescent child aged 5 to 8 years isolated with infectious disease?

December 28th.—What symptoms would lead you to suspect apoplexy? Give nursing treatment of apoplexy.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)