

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.

THE HISTORY OF NURSING.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—I shall be glad if you will publish this letter in THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

Yours faithfully,

M. A. NUTTING.

To the Editor of *The Hospital*,
29, Southampton Street, Strand,
London, England.

DEAR SIR,—My attention has been called to a review of the "History of Nursing," volumes III and IV, published in your issue of March 8th. This review appears to me to be not only markedly unfair and misleading, but to have been written in a deeply hostile spirit and solely for the purpose of discrediting the "History." I therefore deem it my duty to try to correct as far as I am able some at least of the mistaken impressions which the review might leave in the minds of your readers.

Your reviewer intimates that the history has been written by a "small clique" . . . who have collaborated in "mutual laudation," and in "depreciation of all opponents." He calls it a "farrago of prejudice masquerading as history" and adds the grave accusation that its "misrepresentations of facts alone are sufficient to condemn it." Let me reply in the interests of truth and accuracy that the history has not been written as your reviewer intimates by a "small clique," but by a very large number of women in various countries, nurses who have helped to make the history of nursing and can speak from an intimate and full knowledge of the work and events in which they have participated.

To whom, pray, would you turn for accurate information concerning nursing but to those nurses whose ability and devotion to their calling has led them to study its problems for the purpose of improving it and rendering it more efficient? And so far from being "animated by prejudice," the attitude of the writers from various countries seems on the whole moderate and restrained. Doubtless unpalatable truths are presented. It would be difficult indeed to write any true History of Nursing during the past quarter of a century, at least, which would form pleasant reading for those, who in hospitals or out of them, have been concerned with that enterprise which we can only truthfully call the exploitation of nurses. The historian of the future who will have access to the facts will probably have to present a still less pleasant picture. In questioning the veracity of the various authors, your reviewer should be specific in his statements, and thus enable the authors to reply to him.

As my name appears in the review, the opportunity is given which I gladly use, to state that I believe volumes III and IV are history in a much truer sense than the first two volumes, since in the latter, access has been had to first-hand sources. And in this connection let me add that my share in the production of these first volumes is entirely insignificant compared with that contributed by Miss Dock. The history would never have appeared at all had it not been for the generous and liberal way in which Miss Dock took hold of the plan and worked it out, devoting her full time for nearly two years to the task, and bringing to it a great amount of careful research and study, and that freshness, spontaneity and originality which has characterised all of her writings. There is no literary value in the book except that which has been contributed by Miss Dock.

Let me further say that I would have highly valued the honour of being associated with Miss Dock in the production of the last two volumes. The idea of these volumes is entirely hers, the work in securing, arranging and editing the material is hers, that of preparing it for publication is all hers, and the proceeds which come from these books she has, with characteristic generosity, presented to the International Council of Nurses. To many of us the only real defect of the last volumes is the omission of any reference whatever to the large, important and uniquely valuable share which Miss Dock has had in the development of nursing in this country. It is doubtful to my mind if any one of our number has rendered greater service than she has rendered and for the benefit of future generations of nurses this lack in the history should in some way be supplied.

I shall be indebted to you if you will kindly publish this in an early issue of your Journal and would say that I am also sending a copy to THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

Believe me,

Faithfully yours,

M. A. NUTTING.

[Miss Nutting does *The Hospital* newspaper too much honour in replying to its hostile criticisms of Miss Dock's monumental work but the defence could not be in better hands.—ED.]

OUR PRIZE COMPETITIONS.

June 21st.—What is a Rest Cure? Describe it.

June 28th.—What are the complications to be watched for during the puerperal period?

NOTICES.

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