

THE BOYCOTT OF THE PRESS.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—How nice it would be if we were to acquire the habit of calling things by their right names and so save ourselves much disappointment! We have no "Free Press" and we know it. It is a very serious hindrance to progress. The press is supposed to be the educator of the people. In many cases it strangles education. I believe the public would really like to learn more about State Registration for Nurses; but it is impossible that they can learn it through the press which deliberately boycotts this educational movement. I was much obliged to the *Daily Telegraph* for publishing my letter a few days ago, but when Lord Knutsford replied to it making *incorrect statements*, it was not generous or just enough to allow me space to correct them. We badly need legislation which will lessen the autocratic power of the press, and make its boasted freedom a reality instead of a deception.

BEATRICE KENT.

London, N.W.

ORDERLIES IN MILITARY HOSPITALS.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—After having read in a copy of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING for November 27th, 1915, an article entitled "Our Orderlies," by "A Ward Sister," I felt that such an article could only create a false influence on other people's opinions of the orderlies.

It is evident that the writer of that article expected to find young men who had arisen from the leaves of that excellent treatise of Elizabethan days, viz., "Utopia."

In any case, the article conveys the impression that the orderlies do nothing but shirk, and are in a position to carry on practically as they wish within limits.

This is not the case, and it is my endeavour to put the orderlies' case as clearly as possible, so as to counteract "A Ward Sister's" false impressions.

When war broke out, apart from the Regular R.A.M.C., there were actually very few trained orderlies who could be called upon. There were Territorial R.A.M.C. Companies, but these were either already stationed at their posts or were attached to their respective divisions.

But many hospitals were taken over, and reorganised as military hospitals; and in order to staff these, many men were enlisted, and as soon as these hospitals were equipped, they were put into use.

These men had had scarcely any training, and what training they had received was such as was of no use in the actual care of the sick and wounded—namely, foot-drill, scrubbing, mopping, and a few lectures.

Who should go into the wards as nursing orderlies was decided by the authorities, and consequently men who had no aptitude for such work were chosen with those who had, though none had much knowledge of what they were to do.

Consequently, the nurses and sisters found men who could, for some time, be of little use to them, and found also that they lacked "the touch as gentle as a woman's," which, of course, only comes with experience, even to a woman.

Many sisters consequently gave up the idea of getting any help from them in the work of wound-dressing, and promptly found them work such as cleaning pans, scrubbing shelves, &c., which was quite unnecessary, seeing that there was already an orderly set apart for that work.

These nurses at a time when hard pressed after a convoy of wounded, probably found to their cost that a little patience in teaching an orderly even a few things, would have been well placed.

The complaints of a large number of orderlies are that the nurses made no attempt to understand the men's difficulty, that they made scarcely any attempt to assist them and teach them, and that they were constantly being ridiculed if they tried to do anything useful other than menial tasks.

Not only that, but also some nurses are very apt to look down on the orderlies as very much lower than themselves in social standing. An example of this is: An orderly reported sick, and it was necessary for an operation to be performed, though not a serious one. The staff nurse neglected to prepare him, neither giving him a morphine injection nor sending him up ready dressed, but allowed him to walk up in his khaki clothes and boots. When brought to task, she said that she thought it was not necessary, as he was "only an orderly."

"A Ward Sister" must still have very vague ideas as to how work in a military hospital is carried on, for no orderly is allowed to work in his tunic, and nursing orderlies are provided with white gowns to work in.

It is a very exceptional nursing orderly who has a "rooted objection to washing his hands," and the "indignant cries" are not used by patients, for most orderlies are liked by them; and the orderlies, often, during their "off duty" hours, go shopping for the patients, when they might be otherwise enjoying themselves.

Equipment is seldom, or never, taken from the wards, and a matter of five minutes' "French leave" means three or four days' C.B., if reported.

The main cause of the seeming uselessness of the orderlies is the lack of opportunity to learn afforded to them; and this is what the nurses find constantly recoiling on their own heads, although they are unable to perceive it.

Yours, &c.,

AN ORDERLY.

OUR PRIZE COMPETITIONS.

February 12th.—What accidents to patients most often occur in the wards? How would you prevent them?

February 19th.—Describe (a) the symptoms and (b) the nursing of cerebro-spinal fever.

February 26th.—What are the more common causes of neurasthenia? Mention some of the more common symptoms.

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