

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.

VOX POPULI.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—Now that the proceedings of the General Nursing Council are open to the Press, presumably we nurses who are affected by the Rules should have a right to consider them, so that we may express our opinion on them before they are finally agreed. I carefully read the report of the last meeting of the Council, and hope others who have done the same will give warm support to the decisions of the Registration Committee, of which you are Chairman, on the following points:—

1. That our English Council shall have adequate authority to deal with every application for Registration on our Register. Surely those who have been placed by Parliament in the responsible position of compiling the State Register of Nurses cannot exercise such responsibility, if they are to be compelled to register any man or woman selected by other bodies whose standards may not be equivalent to those upon which our Council have agreed for the admission of English Nurses. For instance, how about a Cottage Nurses' Register? Or placing Fever Nurses on the General Register as proposed by the Scottish Board of Health? Is our Council to be compelled to place such nurses *automatically* on our General Register, although we strongly object to such arrangements, and probably should refuse to register if any such Rules were in force for English and Welsh nurses?

I note with satisfaction that our Council voted unanimously for equivalent standards in any system set up for registration between the three Councils, and feel sure our colleagues in Scotland and Ireland will see the justice of this. But how about the nurses' representatives on the Scottish and Irish Councils? Have they taken a firm stand on this important principle?

Then as to finance? There again you will have every just-minded nurse with you. As you infer, the cost of Registration is not merely comprised in stamping a few reference letters, and printing a name in a Register. The upkeep of the whole work of the Council—a very costly business—must be included in paying for Registration. To propose that this can be done for 2s. 6d. a head is ridiculous, and why should we English nurses pay a guinea (little as it is) to maintain our Register if Scottish and Irish nurses may share equal privileges with us for *one-eighth of the cost*? You hit the nail on the head in emphasising the value of professional enfranchisement. Why should I

pay a guinea for the right to vote for the elected nurses on the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, and Scottish and Irish nurses enjoy this important privilege for 2s. 6d.? The Council is *our* governing body, and I object to be governed by persons who may be elected on this cheap and irresponsible vote, and by those, if automatic registration was in force, for whose characters and qualifications our governing body was not responsible. The whole proposal is wrong in principle, and we English nurses must support our Council in its desire to make just Rules for us and all nurses, and to maintain a dignified position with discretionary powers for our Council.

We cannot do better than follow the precedent of the Central Midwives Board. Every midwife registered under the Scottish and Irish Midwives Acts applying to be registered in England must prove the standard equivalent, and pay the same fee of one guinea, as the Board demands from English midwives. Any other system is unjust and must lead to resentment, and why should English nurses submit to it? It would be wrong for us to do so. Now is the time therefore to express our opinion to the Minister of Health and our General Nursing Council. We must begin right if we mean State Registration to succeed.

Yours very truly,

HENRIETTA HAWKINS.

EFFICIENT NURSES FOR ALL CLASSES.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—You report in the JOURNAL that at the meeting of the General Nursing Council on November 3rd the question of a separate Register for Cottage Nurses was brought up. Many trained nurses would like to know what *is* a Cottage Nurse? Well, as far as I can make out it is only our old friend the "handy woman" a little glorified, and backed up by monied people.

Nobody will deny, I think, that the handy woman served her day and generation well, and many a good type of woman helped both doctor and nurse. But to foist her—even in a separate section—upon the State Register, for which trained nurses worked for a generation, and also paid for, is misleading. Surely nobody can think that this Registration business emanates from the Cottage Nurses themselves; it is most likely run by the Lord of the Manor and Lady Bountiful to bolster up the old idea that a less competent nurse is good enough for the poor. Now the poor, we know, have to put up with many things of inferior quality, but when it comes to sickness, they must have the best nursing.

What is wanted is well-trained, efficient nurses for all classes. Nothing else will satisfy the forward movement amongst nurses themselves.

Yours faithfully,

E. HORTON.

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