

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.

EMPLOYMENT OF HOSPITAL HELPERS
REQUISITION.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—I have followed with great interest the articles and letters appearing in your JOURNAL on the degradation and depreciation of Registered Nurses. Your struggle to stem the mighty tide of degrading now flooding the Profession is indeed heroic and timely, and I fervently hope it will be successful—but “I hae ma doots.” There can be no questioning the fact that some State Registered nurses—in high places—are themselves responsible for this calamitous state of affairs, and if degradation must come may it overtake the few who are guilty of its advent.

As a Matron of a training school, I should be glad to receive the comments of my colleagues on the following points:—

1. Recently a State Registered nurse, now an Assistant Matron, applied for a Matron's post in a Voluntary hospital in the North; she sent in a beautiful application, with copies of testimonials. Five weeks later she received a complimentary slip from the secretary in an envelope—unsealed, with a penny stamp—bearing four typed words “Re Matron—post filled”!!

2. On the bi-monthly return sheets of the Ministry of Health we are now asked to return numbers of *all staffs* on the one common form. Matrons, assistant matrons, sisters, nurses, Gamps, auxiliaries, maids, daily workers and chars! Thus, presumably, we are all of equal status in the eyes of the Ministry—we are all just numbers of workers. Truly legal status is wonderfully worth striving for, especially as it dumps us directly in the company of our maids and chars! No wonder there is a dearth of candidates in our profession!

3. Although the country is desperately short of paper, and we are asked to save and salvage all waste, the Ministry of Health has used tons of this precious raw material for cards for the requisitions of Maids from Employment Exchanges. These cards are of stout quality paper, and on them is printed a catechism of questions to which we must supply the answers. From this recklessly extravagant innovation I gather:

(a) That girls will not work in hospitals if they are to be called “Maids,” as this honourable title is *infra dig.* They must be called “Hospital helpers” and receive every consideration and comfort before they agree to work a little! (Oh! for a little Russian stamina and brain to clear out such feeble-minded snobbery at the Ministry.)

(b) Matrons (whether of Voluntary or Municipal hospitals) are presumably no longer capable of getting their own domestic staff in their own way; they must be directed and ordered as to how they are to procure them.

(c) I should like to know why the Ministry of Health is interfering with the question of domestic service—surely the Ministry of Labour can manage its own job?

(d) Maids, along with Gamps, are now to be rewarded with a badge for their paid services. Thank God no one has tried to plaster the members of the Nursing Profession with badges; if this happens, our ruin is imminent.

(e) In case the Matron's intelligence breaks down, or does not rise to such heights, she has received *two sheets* of instructions as to *how* to fill in these superfluous forms! Surely and swiftly our liberties are being stolen from us and we are being *controlled* as absolutely as the Nazis

in Germany. How long are we going to suffer these indignities without a murmur?

Are we going to keep bright the jewel of our freedom and the dignity of our Profession, or are we going to part with our Social Status and give nursing back to the Sairey Gamps and Betsy Prigs of the pre-Nightingale era?

Yours truly,

A HOSPITAL MATRON.

[Form No. H.H.1 is indeed typical political control of women's work. We regret lack of space prevents insertion. But we may state that should a busy Matron require a charlady she is required to fill in an explanatory card of 17 questions *in duplicate*. Amongst them: Hours and free time; Holidays, with or without pay; Any special provision for the welfare of girls under 18?

NOTE.—All whole-time workers on the domestic side in hospitals, as well as those working part-time for a minimum of 96 hours a month—male or female—are presented with a Special Hospital Service Badge!

In our opinion a wicked waste of material and time. Why should hospital workers be bribed to do their duty? The principle which should be instilled into every man, woman and child is that it is an honour to work hard and serve their country.—ED.]

THE NURSING OF THE CHRONIC SICK.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

56, MILTON ROAD,

PORTSMOUTH.

MADAM,—I and my colleagues were very interested in Miss Tinton's letter in this month's B.J.N. Though not mobile, I could a like tale unfold, alas! Not only about the assistant *née* attendant nurses who work in the way she describes, but also of “nurses” in training who “wash” their patients with all garments on. I've known one bowl of water go down the ward for “backs.” The use of screens and soiled linen bin, stripping beds for “changing cases” considered unnecessary. Pails carried round wards to empty urinals in, etc.

I could never express enough appreciation of a few assistant C. N. R. nurses, who are really capable and trustworthy. Others could not have had two years' experience when they started two years ago, and have not benefited by their two years' war work. If only the powers-that-be would take the long view and look to the future of the profession, there would not be such an Augean stable to clear up after the war.

I think Miss Tinton's first proposal the soundest one, as all nurses can obtain a good grounding for real nursing by nursing chronics, many of whom were originally acute cases.

Yours faithfully,

D. E. HORN, S.R.N., C.N.R.

[We agree with our correspondent that Miss Tinton's first suggestion is sound: (1) The affiliation of every Chronic Hospital with an Acute Hospital, so that all nurses in training do a certain amount of chronic nursing. We claim that there should be wards in every training school for chronic cases, no better basis for sound, practical nursing of the sick exists.—ED.]

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