

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



[*The Editor is not responsible for opinions expressed in this Department.*]

November 11, 1893.

DEAR EDITOR: By the gracious act of the Legislature of the State of New York we have the title "Registered Nurse," and none too soon.

I had occasion recently to visit an intelligence office in search of a cook. Outside of the most dingy office of this kind was the largest of blue signs, with the most flaring white lettering, which read, "Male and Female Help supplied to families and institutions. *Trained Nurses.*" Crossing the street to see what was within, I saw on another large sign just at the entrance, "Wanted, dishwashers, \$00.00; potato peelers, \$00.00; chambermaids, \$00.00; sidewalk cleaners, \$00.00; scrub women, \$00.00."

There were no trained nurses "wanted" at any price. Deciding to investigate to what extent the public were being swindled in this instance, I went up dirty, narrow stairs to the second floor, and there found seven or eight serving-men, some negro, some white, lounging and smoking, and had concluded to retreat when the sight of one woman in a distant corner gave me courage to continue. Just then the proprietor came forward, bidding me welcome. Even after years of experience in district work I quailed at the idea of entering the room.

A talk with the proprietor in the doorway gave me the information that "pay" varied with the family—a sliding scale, as it were; that "pay" in institutions was much smaller, and that if I would leave my name and he secured me a "place" he would expect to receive ten per cent. of the first month's "pay."

Declining his invitation to cross the room and make formal application in an inner office, I went down the stairs, wondering what the eight thousand nurses that have their abiding place in this great city can be thinking of, if they are thinking at all, that such things can be.

The time would seem to have come when there must be a central directory for registered nurses in the City of New York; one directory where strangers in need of nurses may go or send and be sure of securing a reliable registered nurse. As the situation is now, there is no way by which the uninitiated may distinguish between such an office as I have described and one which is official in its management. Many of us know only too well that in times of emergencies and excitement little reason is exercised by the public. Such a central directory should be a directory for everything pertaining to the registered nurse and her work. A registered nurse coming to town should be able to find there information on any subject she wished, from the latest news on legislation to the best place to secure the smallest appliance for the sickroom or where to go for comfortable rooms.

Later, with such a directory in working order, there would grow out of it naturally a central club-house with its parlors, reading-rooms, and a general café, open to the public, conducted on a strictly business basis. There could be rooms

for some of its permanent members and also for transients who are from time to time in the city for a few days or a month.

The stock for such an enterprise could easily be taken up by the eight thousand nurses now said to be in New York City, but without waiting to secure capital for this larger venture, steps should be taken at once to lay the cornerstone for the central directory.

In the event of the organization of the County Association which is now being agitated, that association will find it necessary to have permanent headquarters. Some revenue could be depended upon in connection with such a directory from the sale of sickroom supplies and appliances.

What a conserving of time for the medical man, the public, and the nurse, to ring up one place and to leave one's request or order, feeling that it would be attended to in the most expeditious and careful manner possible?

Sterilization of instruments and dressings for operative work would be a great convenience to the surgeon and his assistants and the nurses, and is really very much needed in emergencies calling for operative procedure in a private house.

A central directory in New York City is bound to come. Let us create it now.

MARY E. THORNTON.

DEAR EDITOR: A few months ago I saw in a small baby what looked like a return of meconium after the movements had once been normal. The child was slightly premature, was very drowsy, and for some days it would not nurse. It would not even take a bottle, but was fed on breast-milk, pieced out with peptogenic, from a medicine-dropper. When it was about twelve days old it suddenly consented to nurse directly from the breast, and the doctor ordered all feeding by other means stopped in order to keep up its nursing habit and to increase the supply of breast-milk, if possible. The baby seemed satisfied with the arrangement, but it did not gain in weight, and on the fifth day of breast-feeding it began the day with a black, tarry movement, identical in appearance with meconium. When I showed it to the doctor he called it a "starvation movement," and ordered artificial food added to the baby's nursing diet. After a day or two of fuller meals the movements resumed their normal condition and the baby gained rapidly in weight. The doctor said he thought the black movements were produced by the same causes that produced meconium—a secretion of digestive fluids with no food to work on. There was probably very little breast-milk for the baby.

D.

WAR DEPARTMENT, SURGEON-GENERAL'S OFFICE,
WASHINGTON, November 13, 1903.

To the Editor of THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING.

Permit me, through the pages of your valued JOURNAL, to correct a statement found in the address of the president of the Spanish-American War Nurses, as read before that body assembled in San Francisco in August last. I refer to the paragraph, "Navy Nurse Bill," on page 133 of the November JOURNAL.

The president states that the bill prepared by Dr. Boyd and "amended by a committee from our society and introduced into the Senate at our request was referred to the Navy Department, and there promptly killed by the opposition of the army to anything so far superior to what the Army Nurse Corps had."

Having been on the spot at the time the Navy Nurse Bill was under discussion, I happen to have some personal knowledge of the incidents connected