

The Living Body.*

By Best and Taylor.

HERE IS A WELL KNOWN and much valued book on the human physiology in a new edition. It is enlarged and improved by the new illustrations. New chapters have been added on the action of the antibiotics on the body, something which is of growing interest and importance today when these substances are proving to have some bad as well as many good effects on the body.

It is, I have always thought, one of the most comprehensive and interesting books on this subject. The study of which is endless and can so easily become involved. The book is a "must" for student and practising Tutors, who would do well to obtain a copy of this new edition.

One regrets that the price has had to be increased but it is nevertheless worth every penny. The new edition should if possible be obtained for students' reference libraries.

* Chapman & Hall, 37 Essex Street, London, W.C.2. Price 37/6 net.

U. S.

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 Editor,

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,

The splendid Editorial in July's issue "Efficiency De-throned" is a courageous warning of the deterioration now becoming only too apparent in the domestic departments of our great hospitals—particularly so in the kitchens and catering departments.

Many Regional Hospital Boards are well aware of the appalling state of affairs and have issued "advice" to the Hospital Management Committees that Domestic Supervisors and Catering Officers should be under the direction of the Hospital Matrons. Until this "advice" becomes law, the present state of affairs will continue declining—until recovery becomes almost impossible.

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING must not cease its vigorous campaign against lay autonomy in Hospitals, until the Matron is once again the professional Head and the responsible officer to the Hospital Management Committee for all Nursing and domestic matters.

Good luck to the B.J.N.

Yours sincerely,

GLADYS M. HARDY, *Matron.*

Kernels from Correspondence

"I SEND YOU my most sincere congratulation for receiving the Queen's Coronation Medal. You certainly have given a lifetime of most wonderful and faithful service to the Nursing Profession.

"Long may you be spared to keep the flag flying so faithfully and so loyally."

This sentiment is expressed in many letters sent concerning the award, by Her Majesty the Queen, of the Coronation Medal to Miss Alice Stewart Bryson, F.B.C.N.

MANY KIND WORDS of appreciation have reached this office concerning the Special Coronation Number of this Journal, of which we print two.

"I CONGRATULATE you all on the memorable Coronation Edition of the BRITISH JOURNAL, it is a copy well worth keeping and handing down to the younger folks."

"The Coronation Number of the B.J.N. is superb. How our beloved Founder would have appreciated this Special Number. It is with pride and great pleasure one can pick up and read it again and again."

Mental Hospitals Need More Nurses and Beds

Board of Control's Annual Report

SHORTAGE OF STAFF and overcrowding in mental hospitals in England and Wales are continuing to cause anxiety. In their report to the Lord Chancellor for 1952, the Board of Control state that at the end of the year in the 107 mental hospitals, which excludes those which were formerly Public Assistance Institutions, there were 17,522 more patients than those hospitals were designed, according to prescribed standards, to receive.

"The extent of this overcrowding varies in different hospitals," says the report. "Where the overcrowding is most marked, it becomes difficult properly to classify or to treat separately in appropriate wards patients suffering from different types and in different stages of mental illness. Overcrowding may also affect the comfort and the recreations of many patients: beds have to be placed unsuitably in parts of the day-rooms or in corridors and, in one instance it has been found necessary to use the hospital recreation hall as a dormitory for women patients."

On the shortage of nurses the Board comment: "The number of wards which remain closed for want of nursing staff reflects a shortage which is still extremely serious."

The number of patients in mental hospitals, excluding those which were formerly public assistance institutions, increased by 1,413 during 1952 to 137,039, representing an annual average increase during the past four years of 1,112.

An encouraging point is the general decline in the incidence of tuberculosis among patients in mental hospitals. Apart from 1938 and 1939, the ratio of 6.1 cases per 1,000 patients resident is the lowest figure recorded, and the death rate has fallen to 2.1 per 1,000 under one-half of the rate of a few years ago.

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