

## 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.*

## A LURID MELODRAMA.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—I do not hesitate to call the "Life in a Cottage Hospital"—which is not a Cottage Hospital, by the way—a disgusting and degrading book, made up of those exaggerations and the tendency to class abnormal and unusual bestialities (I can think of no other word) as things of daily and hourly occurrence. Mistakes, follies, even crimes occur now and again in hospitals amongst medical men and nurses, as in other walks of life. Grossness is not always purged from every one who enters the healing profession either as doctor or nurse; there are hospitals that might well be better managed than they are. Youth and high spirits are not always as well controlled as they might be; thoughtlessness and selfishness do not slip from one like a snake's skin because one enters a hospital. But to write a lurid melodrama of the type of the scrawl in question and to say in a hollow voice at the end, *Reader, there is many a Rebley Hospital in England to-day!* is to make a slanderous, untrue and libellous statement.

Nothing is more wrong than the false perspective given by the habit of fishing one scandal from here, another from there—scandals which will occur from time to time until, please God, our wings grow—to piece them together with ghoulish delight, and call the result a truthful narrative. For one hospital where a scandal occurs, there are thousands where honourable men and women are working hard according to the light that is in them to do their duty cleanly and honestly towards the sick confided to their charge.

Mistakes will occur, we are human; overwork and understaffing may cause weariness and slackness; but wilful unkindness is most rare—and brutality practically unknown. The semi-monastic regulations rendered necessary by the peculiar nature of hospital work and the relations, when on duty, between the men and women workers, are not always understood, and are therefore sometimes resented by the younger members of a hospital staff; and the headstrong modern young men or young women, totally unaccustomed to discipline at home, occasionally break out in foolish acts of defiance, of which they are the last to appreciate the professional harm. I have worked in hospitals and allied institutions for twenty-nine years—often in hospitals that required reforming and modernising or reorganising—but have never been faced by a condition of

things even remotely approaching the scenes described in "Life in a Cottage Hospital."

Like Dickens' Fat Boy, the writer of this precious book evidently wants to make the public's flesh creep.

Yours faithfully,

M. MOLLETT.

## A PROFESSIONAL SPRING CLEAN.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—All nurses who honour their profession should write to thank, and not condemn you for the review of "In a Cottage Hospital." The review reminded me of a few incidents which had come under the notice of a friend of mine during her duties as a Poor Law Guardian, and which she related to me, therefore I can quite believe such things are possible.

It is surely high time that we nurses above all people should realise that in public and professional life it is just as essential to expose to the light of public opinion unsavoury practices, and unwholesome corners, as to seek the aid of the Sanitary Inspectors to search out hidden dangers in the drains.

Had there been more wholesome publicity and less hushing up there would be less "Black Plague" and fewer innocent sufferers.

There has been far too much hushing-up and covering over of things unpleasant, and it is high time for a professional "Spring Clean." This can only be effectively carried out by the registration of trained nurses by the State and the formation of a General Nursing Council who would have disciplinary powers. All those who have the welfare of their profession at heart will work whole-heartedly to obtain it instead of trying to hide the evil results of the present chaotic condition of nursing affairs.

With many thanks to you for your fearless attitude in regard to these unpleasant things,

Believe me, dear Madam,

Yours faithfully,

"ANOTHER SUBSCRIBER."

Hôtel Bon Accueil,

Montreux, Switzerland.

[This correspondence will now cease.—ED.]

## NEED FOR SELF-GOVERNMENT.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—I feel sure you will give me this opportunity of a few words of reply to your correspondent "Wroth" in the issue of the 17th ult. "Wroth" advises us to fight tooth-and-nail against the National Insurance Act, even though it has passed through the House! Well, the Bill has passed; and it will stand!

Amendments will be possible, of course, as future developments point the need, the time, and the place.

We as nurses may benefit less (through this Insurance Bill) than any other class of women,

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