

## 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.*

## STATE AND MUNICIPAL SYSTEMS FOR SAVING CHILD LIFE.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

MADAM,—Most of your readers are aware that the infant death rate in the principal French cities and departments has been reduced more than one-third within a single decade as the result of the good work done by "Consultations des Nourissons," whereby mothers are freely assisted and instructed in the care of their own infants. One believes, however, that it will surprise many to learn that the German infantile death-rate has been reduced one-fourth in five years by like means.

In 1905 Berlin followed the example which had been given by Paris first in the year 1894, and there are now 251 German "infant care stations" open in 165 towns of the empire. Berlin has seven large municipal "infant care stations" open daily, and the annual expenditure on each averages £2,400. The staff of each school consists of a senior physician, with several assistants, the "sister-in-charge," a number of trained nurses, and attendants. In 1909, the babies brought to Berlin "stations" numbered 13,494, being nearly 30 per cent. of all born alive, and 156,510 consultations were given, with 38,266 visits to homes.

When these "stations" were first established, 60 per cent. of the babes were bottle-fed, but last year the percentage was only 35, and the mortality among the children has been reduced from 8.4 to 4 per cent. During the same period the infant death rate of the city has been reduced from 20.6 to 15.6. The working mothers of Germany are now protected from employment statutorily during a period of two weeks before and six weeks after child-birth, and the sick insurance fund must compensate compulsorily for loss of wages all who have been insured for six months, and entitles to free medical attendance, with nursing, either at home or in hospital, at choice.

In comparison with above, while an increasing amount of voluntary educational work is being rendered at many centres in the United Kingdom, there are only eight "schools for mothers" in Great Britain receiving more than £200 per annum. The highest is Glasgow (Municipal), £650; and St. Pancras (Private) is next with an income of £600. The standard of child life in our great cities has been raised decidedly by the work already done, but it is a pity that the results achieved should have been retarded by lack of adequate financial resource. It should be stated

that about half of the expenditure in the German system is used to provide weekly premiums for poor mothers, enabling them to obtain suitable food while nursing their own children.

Public health authorities, remembering the Shakespearian adage, "The boy is father of the man," would do well to pay attention also to those eminent hygienic experts who presently asseverate "The babe is guardian of the adult."

Thanking you in anticipation, and trusting I do not trespass unduly upon your valuable space,

I am,

Your obedient Servant,

Belfast.

PROGRESS.

## PRIVATE NURSES AND NATIONAL INSURANCE.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

MADAM,—Considerable doubt and anxiety seems to exist in the minds of many private nurses as to whether or not private nurses must insure under the National Insurance Act. On behalf of the Scottish Nurses' Branch of the Women's Friendly Society, the Commissioners have been specifically asked, "Must nurses working on own account, insure." The Commissioners have replied: "Generally speaking nurses working on own account will be liable to be compulsorily insured unless the rate of their remuneration exceeds £160 a year." It therefore seems clear that under ordinary circumstances all nurses must insure.

Yours faithfully,

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[Certainly we agree with Dr. Hamilton Robertson that private nurses working on their own account will have to pay the 13s. a year, representing their own contribution of 3d. per week, but we advise them to add to the account of expenses which they render to their employer the 3d. due each week on his, or her behalf.—Ed.]

## OUR PRIZE COMPETITIONS FOR APRIL.

*April 13th.*—Give the recipes of six simple dishes for night nurses, which could be easily made in the ward kitchen?

*April 20th.*—Describe the modern system of treating and nursing pneumonia.

*April 27th.*—Give some information on the training of infants.

## NOTICES.

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