

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.

PRIVATE NURSES AND NATIONAL INSURANCE.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—I have, since the passing of the National Insurance Act, had some opportunities of learning which points private nurses working on their own account find difficulty in satisfying themselves upon. I have found that few are not fully aware that generally speaking a nurse is liable to be compulsorily insured unless she earns over £160 per annum, or is in receipt of an income (independent of her own exertions) of £26 or over per annum.

Your editorial remarks under a letter on the above subject in the issue of the 6th inst. deal with one of the points in question, "How should the employer's contribution be obtained?" It is satisfactory to know that you advise the charge to be made in the weekly account, for, when asked the question I have replied, "Enter 3d. per week against employer's contribution National Insurance in the account you render your employer." "But," some have argued, "3d. is such a small sum, should we not just pay it ourselves." This seems a very questionable position for nurses to put themselves in, however, and they will be judicious to avoid it. If for any reason a nurse is anxious to save her employer 3d., she is quite at liberty to reduce her fee of say, £2 to £1 19s. 9d., charging the extra 3d. under the head of National Insurance; but she is not legally empowered to exempt her employer from paying his or her National Insurance contribution, an obligation probably as binding as the payment of any other tax.

I am,
Yours faithfully,
E. A. STEVENSON.
Hon. Secretary the Scottish
Society of Trained Nurses.
Bay View, Johnshaven,
Kincardineshire,

A PRIVILEGE TO SIGN.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—With "Rhoda Metherell" I too consider it a privilege to sign the petition for the release of the prisoner "dying of cancer in prison." As a nurse of the sick and one who considers where sickness and suffering are concerned there is neither sex, nationality, politics, nor any law but that of sympathy, it seems almost incredible that any member of the nursing sisterhood should hesitate to sign a petition for mercy

for a prisoner (even if she was a criminal), especially for one who belongs to a branch of our own profession. I regret, however, that in attempting to get signatures to the petition I have been astonished at the cold-blooded manner in which some of my colleagues have refused to appeal to the Home Secretary for the release of Nurse Pitfield from prison, especially when it is realised that the term of six months' imprisonment is vindictive in the extreme, even if the prisoner was in good health. On the other hand, the general public, both men and women, sign willingly, and express the deepest indignation at the brutality with which this poor woman, dying of the most painful disease in one of its most agonising forms is being punished during the last months of life. If hospital discipline and training are responsible for eliminating spontaneous sympathy and a love of mercy from professional nurses, no wonder we so seldom hear a good word for the members of our cloth from the general public.

Sick people do not need automata, but the ministrations of merciful, sweet and tender women, who do not blindly and expediently cling to the letter of the law where life and death are concerned. Please send me fifty more Petition Forms.

I remain, dear Madam,
Gratefully yours,
MARION S. TURNER.

Brighton.

[We endorse every word of this humane letter.—Ed.]

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—I, as an Australian citizen, wish in some way to express my indignation at the treatment of the English women fighting for what is their right. I have collected sixty signatures from among my friends, who, when hearing the case of Nurse Pitfield, feel the same horror with which I myself am filled; I hope these names will be of some use to you, for *everything* ought to be done to get this sick woman released.

Sincerely yours,
Wymering Mansions,
Maida Vale. E. HOARE.

[Since this letter was received Nurse Pitfield has been released. We are not surprised that an enfranchised Australian woman should be horrified at her treatment.—Ed.]

SOCIAL PURIFICATION.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR EDITOR,—The friends of Miss Genevieve Cooke, who was the first editor of the *Nurses Journal of the Pacific Coast*, and has been prominent in nursing organisation on the Coast, will not be surprised to learn that, in addition to her nursing interests, she is throwing herself heart and soul into the wider work of women in California, where the recent

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