

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.

STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY NURSING ASSOCIATION.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—My attention has been called to a paragraph in your number of the 12th inst. headed "Passing Rich on £40 a Year," in which you state that the work of our village-trained Staffordshire nurses comes under the designation of sweated labour.

Allow me to state some considerations why this term of opprobrium is undeserved by either the Stafford County Council, or by my association, and also why it is eminently desirable to increase the number of village nurses.

In the first place, it is an incorrect and unfair way of putting it to write that "when trained the midwife will receive a salary of 16s. per week." The fact really is that in consideration of our giving a pupil a year's training—which, as you correctly say, costs us £50—we guarantee that she shall, during the three years for which she is bound to serve us, receive a salary of *not less than* 16s. a week during the first year, and not less than 18s. a week during the second and third years. At the end of the three years she makes her own terms, which are usually £1 1s. a week, and if she remains for a further year she gets a bonus of £5 in addition.

Moreover, if she is capable and diligent, and has the good fortune to serve a local association where there is a lady bountiful (and there are many such) she often gets more than the 16s. or 18s. during her three years of service.

It surely is not unfair that the nurse should, to some extent, repay the cost of her training by a lower wage.

In this county 10s. a week will cover her board and lodging, so that a girl of fair education and good conduct and character who gets her C.M.B. certificate and six months' general training free, gratis and for nothing, begins her profession with some £15 or £16, rising to £28 for her clothes and personal pleasures.

I should like to see larger salaries paid; but compare this condition with that which obtains with a bank clerk, or a lad in a shop or in an office, whose education has cost far more, and you will see that Staffordshire girls are by no means "sweated" or hardly used.

In the second place, these village nurses are some of the most useful persons in the community, and it would be nothing short of a crime to stop the creation of them. In how many labourer's homes, both in the rural districts and in the bad conditions which exist in our Black Country, do

these women bring sweetness and light, and relief from suffering, help to teach the ignorant and carry with them cleanliness, order and comfort?

Is not this a better profession for a girl than to go into a mill or a manufactory or a shop?

I am tempted to suggest that the writer of the par in question has had no practical experience, but, like so many journalists, seeks to teach the public from some impossible peak in Dreamland.

No doubt everybody ought to have £100 per annum, payable quarterly in advance, but, failing that Utopia, why not encourage us to do the best we can with the resources at our disposal, rather than sneer at our efforts?

I am, Madam,

Your obedient servant,

H. R. BRUXNER, Hon. Sec.

Chaseley House, Rugeley.

[As there are many points in this letter to which we wish to refer, and for which we have no space this week, we propose to deal with it in our next issue. In the meantime, Mr. H. R. Bruxner may rest assured that as this is a professional journal, only professional nurses speak editorially in its columns. As justice to the insured sick is the crux of the question to which this letter refers, we hope our readers will express an opinion on it.—ED.]

CAUSE AND EFFECT.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—The interest aroused by your editorial of the 5th ult. shows how quickly people are stirred when their personal interests are touched, as against a matter of mere principle. For twenty-five years you and a few others have been preaching in season and out of season, by word and pen, the absolute necessity of State Registration if trained nurses are to be protected and a minimum standard of training instituted and maintained.

Save for a far-seeing minority, the rank and file of trained nurses have been either indifferent or lethargic. Their attitude can be summed up in the following dialogue: I had been talking State Registration to a group of nurses, and a young nurse said, "Do you really believe we shall ever get it?" "Yes," I replied. "Then there is no need for me to trouble about it," was the response. Her own responsibility and duty to her profession did not occur to her.

Many of those who believe that State Registration is the right basis for their profession will not exert themselves, will sacrifice nothing to get it. It will come, why trouble? Now they can see the effects of their indifference. The Chairman of the London Hospital has always been opposed both to a three years' training in the wards, and State Registration, and is on the Nursing Committee of the Q.A.I.M.N.S., in which we find that three best paid posts are given to London Hospital nurses, who hold only a two years' certificate of training. They may or may not have had further

previous page

next page