

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 SHORTAGE OF PROBATIONERS.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—The replies of Mr. John Burns, the President of the Local Government Board, to Dr. Chapple's questions in the House of Commons on the shortage of nurses prove either his ignorance on the whole nursing question—or were not intended to be taken seriously.

To state that the present dearth of nurses was "temporary . . . and due to the National Insurance Act," and that "the deficiency is being supplied" is surely very wide of the mark. The dearth will not be "temporary" unless as Dr. Chapple suggests the State interests itself in our concerns, and does something to raise the status and dignity of the profession. I am the matron of a well ordered county hospital—we have advertised far and wide in nursing papers for probationers and I receive no answers of any sort. I have made enquiries amongst others especially friends managing special hospitals and their difficulties are the same as my own—and the deficiency is *not* being supplied. What is to be done? The sick must be nursed, and well nursed, if England is not to fall out of the rank of civilized nations. Those who oppose the organization of the nursing profession by the State deserve the condemnation of the whole community; it is only by some sort of organization that we can hope to so co-ordinate the various training schools—general and special—and encourage the class of young woman we want to enter them. Mr. Holland says "not a woman worth her salt" is deterred from entering a hospital because there is no registration—that may be because many women worth their salt know nothing of training conditions before they enter hospitals, but they do know the type of woman they meet all over the country wearing nurses' uniforms without, or with little, hospital training—and those "who are worth their salt" are not going to be associated with them. Registration would in time eliminate the unfit and disreputable, so that the lack of it does prevent the type of woman required from becoming trained nurses, even if they are not aware of the fact.

Yours truly,

A COUNTY HOSPITAL MATRON.

[We have received several letters on this subject. A lady guardian writes: "I have never known so much difficulty in procuring dependable, respectable nurses." A Superintendent Nurse writes: "My health has quite broken down with the worry of ill-trained, undisciplined subordinates . . . I am going to give up the Poor Law." A

superintendent of a well-managed, well paid private nursing institution in the South of England wants forty more nurses on her staff—she is unable to procure them. A matron writes: "Now that we are compelled to admit uneducated girls as probationers—and what nation is so ill-educated as our own—half my time is taken up drumming the very elements of theory into their unreceptive minds, all the pleasure of teaching has departed, and the practical side of their work requires more instruction, too. One gets more and more tired of it. . . because a few large metropolitan hospitals have not yet begun to feel the pinch, the evil throughout the country may presumably be ignored." A matron from one of our Dominions writes: "It is a pity so many flighty women are sent out here—they set a bad example to those in the country—they do more harm than good—they are so unused to social intercourse with military men and professional men generally, they seem to lose their heads entirely. We want a very different class." We fear Mr. Burns will find that parliamentary platitudes will have very little effect in satisfying this wide-spread discontent in the nursing world. State Organization through State Registration is imperative. We demand "classification as a testimony of fitness" in the ranks of women workers, as he demanded it through the Trades Unions for his own class in the past; and until we get it there is no doubt nursing standards will go from bad to worse, and no department be more discredited than the Local Government Board of England.—ED.]

OUR PRIZE COMPETITIONS.

June 7th.—What do you understand by summer diarrhoea in infants, and what is the cause?

June 14th.—What is Gastritis. How is it usually treated?

June 21st.—What is a Rest Cure? Describe it.

June 28th.—What are the complications to be watched for during the puerperal period?

NOTICES.

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[previous page](#)

[next page](#)