

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 OVERSTRAIN OF HOSPITAL MATRONS.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—A very common mistake is made that all the hard work in the nursing world is done by the rank and file, and yet how often we read of the resignation of matrons, caused by ill health? May I take up the cudgels for a class of workers who after all get more kicks than halfpence. I have been a matron, and I retired from office after many years' work because I could not endure the overstrain. This overstrain arose from several causes, largely preventable in my opinion. First, and foremost must be counted insufficient help, and consequently insufficient time off duty. Second, the insubordinate spirit of the age, and the constant blame for the omissions of others, through lack of support in enforcing discipline. Third the interference by men lay and medical, in the domestic and nursing department, of which they had not any expert knowledge, and fourth, the lack of any standard and system of nursing education, either theoretical or practical, to which every probationer must attain, and provision for which it is the duty of the Committee to make. There are many compensations in the position of a hospital matron, but the constant strain to attain a high standard of nursing without adequate help and appliances, and the ignorance of those to whom she is responsible, is becoming an ever increasing evil, which is calculated to break down the health of the most robust woman who really attempts to do her duty. I should like to hear what other matrons have to say on this subject.

I am, yours truly,

ON THE SHELF.

[We think there is a disposition upon the part of the hospital world generally to imagine the matron is made of cast iron. The responsibility of training poor material is becoming a very serious question. We hear constantly of matrons in the prime of life retiring because of ill health. Take the London Hospitals at the present time—St. Thomas', St. Mary's, Westminster, St. Peter's—the matrons of all these institutions are retiring because of breakdowns in health, the majority at a time when their experience makes them exceedingly valuable officials. We do not hear of these holocausts amongst hospital secretaries, or indeed in any class of male official, and we must conclude that the strain of office amongst them is not so great as amongst the women workers. No male official, for instance, works for a seven days' week. His time is almost invariably five and a half days, and his hours seldom exceed a seven or

eight hours' day. How different are the hours of duty of the majority of matrons. Then the attempt to maintain discipline, which no man really understands, so far as women are concerned, is a constant strain on a matron few people appreciate, and the latter day parent least of all. The average father expects his daughters to be trained in hospitals free of all cost to his own purse, and is keenly on the outlook for compensation should her physical capacity become impaired. This is a subject on which with our correspondent we should appreciate the opinion of hospital matrons.—ED.]

INFORMATION REQUIRED.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—Can any of your readers give me full particulars of the conditions relating to the Tontine of the first thousand nurses in the Royal National Pension Fund? I cannot obtain information from the office.

Yours truly,

GRADUATE NURSE.

[For the information of the majority of our readers, a tontine is a loan raised on life annuities with the benefit of survivorship.—ED.]

JUST DELIGHTED.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM EDITOR,—Canadian nurses are pleased to note how much interest THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING takes in their progress. The nurses here are just delighted at the prospect of writing "R.N." after their names, and feel they owe much to those pioneers at home who prepared the path for the passage of their Registration Act.

Yours truly,

Winnipeg.

L. F. CHARLTON.

OUR PRIZE COMPETITIONS.

July 5th.—What is Leprosy, and how may it be treated?

July 12th.—What precautions would you take in nursing a suspected case of syphilis?

July 19th.—Enumerate the different means of reducing fever.

July 26th.—How would you feed, and what means would you take to relieve a patient with an acute attack of indigestion?

NOTICE.

In response to numerous requests from busy social workers and teachers, the Schools Committee of the National Food Reform Association has decided to issue visitors' tickets (price 3s.) admitting to single sessions of the Guildhall School Conference. Holders of such tickets will be entitled to obtain a set of the papers, now ready, (price 2s. 6d.) and to take part in the discussions, as well as to secure tickets for luncheon in the Crypt on Monday, June 30th (price 2s. 6d.). Apply, the Secretary, National Food Reform Association, 178, St. Stephen's House, Westminster.

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